

Hammer Horror

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No.4
JUNE

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Warfare

Evo, lead singer of thrash metal group Warfare, talks to Janet Mahnaz about an unusual concept album...

"After being in the Angelic Upstarts, and getting pissed at being spit on, I wanted to do something more rock-oriented so I formed my own band. We found we had put together this lethal three piece: Warfare." Says burly lead-singer Evo. "I don't know how you would explain what we created - we have a strange aura. The papers call us 'the loudest thing since Motorhead', which was not our intention." Not that Warfare are averse to the association. "However, you have to respect a band like Motorhead: Wozel, Lemmy and the band are good friends of mine, they still put hairs on the back of my neck when I listen to them - it's good old rock and roll."

Evo insists he is "a Hammer aficionado, not a fan," despite dedicating his latest album to his youthful TV

recollections. "It's a nostalgic trip from when I was a little boy," he laughs. "It was always a thrill if you were allowed to stay up at that time to watch a Hammer movie. That sort of came back to me when I was watching *Dracula* after 12 or 13 years and I thought it would be nice to write a concept album about that."

And so *Hammer Horror* was conceived. "I'd completed our fourth album, which was a concept album and it went down really well with the press and the kids. I thought it then would be nice to do something else where it would be obvious what we were doing. Some metal fans may have felt betrayed, however; Warfare made a conscious decision to change direction in order to reach a wider audience."

News of their recording soon came to the attention of Graham Skeggs at Hammer, who encouraged Evo and the group to re-record their album to "make it more commercial." A rearrangement was the result. "We put in more tracks, re-did the drums, bass and things on the rhythms. That's how *Hammer Horror* should have been done in the first place," Evo concedes.

One of the outstanding tracks on the album, *Scream of the Vampire*, concerns Christopher Lee's wish to portray the Dracula role true to the Bram Stoker novel. "Lee does not think Dracula has been done authentically," Evo elaborates, "and I reflected that through the lyrics as a longing for the faithful storylines."

Warfare's involvement in this project has led Evo to venture into Hammer's headquarters where he was intrigued by the script of the as-yet-unfilmed *Vlad the Impaler*. Graham Skeggs has assured Evo that when filming begins there shall be a cameo role waiting for him. More than tempted by this proposal Evo is nevertheless adamant that "I don't watch modern movies, I thought the Francis Ford Coppola film [Bram Stoker's Dracula] was dreadful - I'd rather watch paint dry." And he's well qualified to know as, when not recording, he restores and decorates fairground rides.

Silva Screen and Warfare have kindly donated 20 personally signed CDs of *Hammer Horror* to the winners of our competition:

Evo is a school nickname but what is the real name of the lead singer of Warfare?

1. Paul Young
2. Paul Walker
3. Paul Evans

Put your answer, your name and your address on the back of a postcard or sealed envelope and send your entry to our editorial address marked Warfare Competition. Good luck, and remember, it's only rock and roll...

Competition rules

1. No multiple entries will be accepted.
2. No employees of Marvel Comics Ltd (their families, or employees of the competition's sponsoring companies may apply).
3. The editor's decision is final. No correspondence shall be entered into.
4. Competition entries must arrive by second post on 26th June 1992.



A ROCK TRIBUTE TO THE STUDIO THAT DRIPPED BLOOD

Hammer Network

by Bill Harry

Caroline Munro, whose film work began with appearances in *Dracula* AD 1972 and *Captain Kronos* Vampire Hunter, put her career on hold for the birth of her second child, Iona, last June. Amongst the projects she consequently cancelled was an appearance in *Highlander III*. She's also had to cancel a number of proposed appearances at conventions.

"I decided not to travel until Iona was at least a year old," she told me.

"I do hope to appear at a convention in Atlanta in June. If I do, I'll take the baby with me. I went to the Atlanta convention a couple of years ago; it's the biggest in the States and it covers science-fiction, fantasy and horror. This year I think it must be something to do with Hammer because I believe they've also invited Christopher Lee and Ingrid Pitt."

Caroline is married to film-maker George Dugdale. Some years ago, George obtained the rights to a Doctor Who feature film in which Caroline was due to appear. Unfortunately, despite having Alan Rickman agreeing to play the Doctor and Leonard Nimoy agreeing to direct, complications arose and it's not clear what will happen with the project.

In the meantime, George and Caroline are developing a TV series concept in which Caroline will star. The show is called *The Fantasy Chronicles*, and Caroline plays the editor of the said magazine. Her staff comprise a variety of limps and monsters...

George has already had preliminary talks with a major television company who have shown enthusiasm for the project.

Christopher Lee Signing

Christopher Lee will be signing the sleeves of the Lumiere videos *Rasputin the Mad Monk* and the widescreen *Dracula Prince of Darkness* at Forbidden Planet, 71 New Oxford Street, London, on Monday 29th May. The signing takes place between 12.30 and 1.30pm, and video purchasers will also be able to get their copies of *Hammer Horror* signed. For further details telephone Forbidden Planet on (0171) 836 4179.

Silva Screams

Silva Screen Records is a label after a Hammer fan's own heart. With a catalogue numbering countless scores from horror movies, cult films and TV shows, it provides an unrivalled collection of soundtracks.

Of immediate interest to Hammer enthusiasts are *Vampire Circus Featuring the Return of Dracula* (FILMED 127) which is a collection of rare horror music including other vampire 'themes' from films such as *Flight Night*, *Vamp*, *Children of the Night*, *Thirst*, *The Hunger* and *Sundown*.

Hammer Horror (FILMED 130) is a heavy metal tribute to the company by Warfare, who comprise Evo on drums, percussion and lead vocals, Zlaughtier on bass guitar and Algy Ward on guitars. Highlights of the colourful inlay booklet are specially written introductions by Peter



Photo © Jane Bown/Photo

Cushing and Christopher Lee. A word of warning though – this definitely isn't one to file under 'easy listening.'

The Horror of Dracula (FILMCD 708) features Christopher Lee narrating the story of Dracula, complete with music and chilling sound effects. The album, which also features suites of music from Hammer's Dracula movies, is also notable for its lavish fold-out relay booklet.

Dracula: Classic Scores from Hammer Horror (FILMCD 714) includes new digital recordings of the Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Neil Richardson, performing music from Dracula, Dracula Has Risen From the Grave, Taste the Blood of Dracula, Dracula Prince of Darkness and Vampire Circus.



Robert Urquhart 1922–1995

Alan Barnes remembers Robert Urquhart, who died on 21st March.



I was with great sadness that I learned of Robert Urquhart's recent death. Just last November I'd had the opportunity to interview this distinguished Scots actor and hotelier, unwittingly becoming probably the last to do so (see Hammer Horror Issue 1).

Initially somewhat taken aback, I think, when I called him – pretty much out of the blue – at his

Invernesshire home, he soon warmed to the subject and spoke at good length in a warm, actorly burr: fondly about his beginnings in the trade at Glasgow's Park Theatre; keenly about his work on *Knights of the Round Table* alongside legendary Hollywood star Jon Gardner; lucidly (albeit with, perhaps, a touch of considered distance) in remembering playing hero Paul Krenpe in Hammer's *The Curse of Frankenstein*. Robert was desperately proud of his work on the recent TV film, *The Long Road*: it's one of many impeccable performances to remember him by. Robert had only recently been shortlisted for a BAFTA Award, and retirement was definitely not on the cards; a real gentleman of the old school, he seemed game for anything.

Thank you, Robert, and God bless.

My Top Ten

Author-journalist Howard Maxford, whose book *Behind the Screams – The Hammer Story* is being published in February 1996, picks his desert island films...



1. *The Devil Rides Out*

It was hard enough whittling my favourite Hammer films down to just ten, never mind putting them in preferential order. However, if a movie had to top the list it would be this one, one of the studio's classics. Christopher Lee simply exudes authority as Le Duc de Richleau, Fisher's direction is flawless and James Bernard's score is one of his best.

2. *Vampire Circus*

Always a favourite of mine, this one gets my vote for its excellent mid-Europan atmosphere, its action-packed Bond-style pre-credit sequence (a movie in itself) and David Whitaker's memorable score.

3. *Dracula*

Hammer's best-ever film, it remains a first-class achievement in every department.

4. *Dracula Prince of Darkness*

One of the first horror movies I ever saw on late-night television. This really made an impression on me – particularly the sequences in which Fisher lets his camera rove the apparently deserted corridors of Castle Dracula.

5. *Frankenstein and the Monster From Hell*

A miniature delight, the movie makes the most of its confined asylum setting, whilst Cushing's performance, Fisher's direction and Bernard's music are as good as ever.

6. *Frankenstein Must Be Destroyed*

A real throat-grabber this one, particularly the opening sequence. The scene involving the corpse and the burst watermain is also superbly done.

7. *The Nanny*

A genuine 'mini-Hitchcock', this excellent psycho-drama was director Seth Holt's finest achievement, and certainly worthy of comparison to Hitchcock, whilst Davis gives one of her best performances as the deranged nanny. The rest of the cast are good too, including my favourite supporting actor James Villiers.

9. *The Quatermass Experiment*

The film that started it all for Hammer, this pacy little black-and-white number still manages to hit all the buttons.

9. *Quatermass and the Pit*

This really is a bumsinger of a film. Kneale's script is simply packed with ideas, Roy Ward Baker's direction is excellent and the performances fine throughout.

10. *The Hound of the Baskervilles*

Not a Hammer horror as such, but with a storyline as strong as this and a cast which complements it you have one great film. I rate this as Peter Cushing's finest performance for Hammer and recommend it to anyone who hasn't seen it yet.

Send your letters to:
Satanic Writes,
Hammer Horror,
Marvel Comics Ltd.,
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13/15 Arundel Street,
London WC2R 3DX.

Letters may be edited for reasons of space and clarity. Full addresses will only be printed if specially requested.

Let me first congratulate you on the both your Collectors' Special issue and the first issue of *Hammer Horror*, a magazine that I will look forward to month after month – more so than any other horror magazine currently on the market (and there are many here in the United States – far too many!).

I'm mainly writing to inform your readers of the whereabouts of former Hammer leading lady Veronica Carlson. She and her family currently reside on the island of Hilton Head, off the coast of South Carolina in the south-east part of the United States. As a South Carolina resident and an independent filmmaker working on a horror anthology, this news was simply too good to be true. My partner, Paul Talbot, and I found the perfect part for her in our anthology film which just happened to include a segment taking place at the turn of the century – a segment that had been inspired by the Gothic style of Hammer films.

The story, set in 1891, is about an innocent Halloween party for adults that gets out of hand when one of the guests, a retired stage magician, brings an authentic Egyptian mummy to unwrap. Following a midnight seance where strange things occur, it becomes more and more evident that the mummy's spirit has indeed come back to haunt the living. We both knew that Veronica would be perfect for the rôle of Grace, the woman who throws the Halloween party, so we immediately set about contacting her.

Just like a fairy tale coming true, Veronica read the script, was very complimentary, and quickly agreed to do the film. Because the budget only allowed us to use her for one day, we had to shoot most of the others actors' lines and reactions a week before. On Veronica's day, all we shot were her lines and her reaction shots. It's not an ideal way to shoot, since you become susceptible to continuity errors, but I must say that the end result is very satisfactory. In fact, nobody new to the film ever catches on that scenes were broken up in such a manner.

As for Veronica herself, she was the consummate professional and very easy to work with. From the very beginning, when I was rehearsing her in her own living room, she was concerned with her character's motivation and getting across exactly what I wanted. I understand that she was a bit nervous on the morning of the shoot because it had been a while since she last stepped in front of the cameras in a dramatic rôle. I found that very amusing because I was also extremely nervous working with a veteran of such horror

classics as *Dracula Has Risen from the Grave* and *Frankenstein Must Be Destroyed*. But once the work began, both of us were much too preoccupied to ponder much except the task at hand. It was an exhausting day, but one of the most rewarding of my young career. And I have Veronica Carlson to thank for that.

The film, entitled *Prokashore*, is completed and will probably be released on video in the United States in 1995.

William Cooke,
Columbia,
USA

Len Harris died in Middlessex Hospital, London, on the evening of Tuesday 21st February 1995. Len dearly loved the cinema, to which he made no small contribution. He was a veteran of films for *Exclusive/Hammer* ranging from travelogues to thrillers to many of the classic Gothic horrors. He had made films for the Army Information Service during the 1940s and, after his retirement from Hammer in the late sixties, had worked on Kubrick's 2001: A Space Odyssey and Patrick McGeehan's cult television series *The Prisoner*. He had won the affection and respect of all those who had worked with him.

When we visited him in hospital one of the nurses caring for him said that she had never known an elderly patient visited by so many young friends.

We got to know Len through our interest in his work, and he was always prepared to help with research for articles and support conventions dedicated to Hammer films.

Because he was such a thoroughly nice man, Len soon became a good friend who joined in dinner parties and informal gatherings. Conversation would always include some reference to Hammer but we always spoke about other aspects of the cinema, both contemporary and of years gone by, and many other things. He was bright, witty and simply good company. Recently, whilst giving an informal interview, he apologised that his memory was not as good as it used to be – and then proceeded to talk for well over an hour, giving all manner of detail about films he'd ever worked on since the late 1940s!

Len was one of those genuinely nice people that you could not help but like. And even if he had not worked for Hammer, and we had met him in some other way, he still would have become a friend. We are all going to miss him.

Colin and Sue Cowie
Jan Rines
Ruth Hague
Fred Humphreys
Wayne Kinsey
Mike Murphy
Tom Pears
Anne and Trevor Wayne

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to offer my congratulations on a wonderful magazine. I purchased the first issue on a whim, but soon realised that I was reading a very well thought out and informative guide. I waited in anticipation for the next, although I must confess to harbouring doubts as to how the magazine would progress. All too often second issues seem to fall apart. With the first sapping all the ideas. I was, however, very pleasantly surprised. Although the small book-review section (which, might I add, I found very useful), seems to have disappeared, the magazine as a whole was at least as good as, or dare I say even better than, its predecessor.

Dracula Prince of Darkness was one of the very first Hammer films I ever saw, and has remained one of my firm favourites. I am fifteen, so really the only films I have seen are those which I buy on video or



tape from the television. I would love to see them as they were meant to be viewed, in the hushed quiet of the cinema, but unfortunately this is impossible. I feel that this must detract from their original atmosphere, but still remain a huge fan of the whole genre. I think that many newer horror films have simply gone straight for the 'splatter effect'. This can get terminally boring, as very often suspense (which is, I think, what makes a horror film), is completely sacrificed to make way for the gore.

Issue 2's Interview with Neil Jordan was superb, although I must confess to being one of the many who, while finding *Interview With the Vampire* extremely beautiful and atmospheric, delicately preferred the book. Anne Rice's writing and characters create so vivid a picture that even when actors are as talented and well-cast as Pitt, Cruise and Durnat, there is still something which prevents them from being truly believable as Rice's Louis, Lestat, and Claudia. They still seem to be 'interpretations'. One thing which really rankled was the casting for Armand - Antonio Banderas. The character had been changed completely and was a disappointment.

**R Barker,
Leeds,
West Yorkshire**

Blood Lines, our irregular look at the latest horror literature, makes a reappearance on page 38.

I have never before gone to the lengths of writing to tell someone how exceptional they are, but here goes - your magazine is brilliant, and it's about time someone gave Hammer the recognition they so richly deserve!

My love of Hammer films began when I was about eight, (I'm nineteen now). I still remember waking up on one dark, stormy night to the sound of the television in my room. My brother was watching a late-night horror movie and I decided to watch the film. The film was *Dracula Prince of Darkness*, which is still my all-time favourite Hammer movie. It's hard to put my feelings about that movie onto paper. The film wasn't original (Iodrisis decide to spend the night in a spooky castle when strictly told they shouldn't) but it's the atmosphere and the style that really grabs my interest, which unfortunately not many horror movies do. Of course there are exceptions like *Pet Cemetery*, *The Crow* or the fantastic *Interview With the Vampire*.

I have some questions that I hope you'll be able to answer:

1. Why isn't Hammer's *Dracula* available on video in this country? And where is *The Curse of Frankenstein*?

2. Will you be keeping readers up to date with the new Hammer movies? Are they planning to make any this year?

3. I remember watching a movie years and years ago called *The Ghoul*. It was a fantastic movie and I always thought it was a Hammer film, although I recently discovered that it isn't. Do you have any information about this film?

Keep up the fantastic work.

**Stephen Ross,
Byrd,
Vides**

The continuing non-availability of *The Curse of Frankenstein* and *Dracula*, surely two of the most important post-war horror films ever made, is a gripe that dominates our busy mail bag. It's something that we're endeavouring to get to the bottom of here at Hammer Horror, and as soon as we get a result we'll let you know. One thing it's worth bearing in mind is that both those films were made when Hammer were producing films for US movie giants Universal. This period in Hammer's life, sometimes referred to as its 'golden age', was of course dominated by remakes of classic Universal films and has always been poorly represented on home video in this country.

As for the new films Hammer are planning, many of the company's projects are strictly under wraps and, besides, are still in early developmental stages. The first film we are likely to see is the long-awaited *Vlad the Impaler*, but we're not going to be party to any late speculation on the film's progress and will only print news when it is absolutely confirmed. Hammer Horror readers will, of course, be the first to know when there is concrete progress.

The Ghoul was released in 1975, and was one of a handful of horror films Tyburn produced around the time Hammer were winding down. Producer Kevin Francis assembled a familiar team which included his father Freddie as director, writer Tony Hinds and stars Peter Cushing and Veronica Carlson. The film was screened by BBC1 last year, and a segment from it (where Cushing's character mourns his late wife) was highlighted in the moving tribute which appeared after the second instalment of *The Flesh and Blood* documentary.

The fascinating *Hammer Horror* has had no trouble making the trip across the Atlantic; I have found it in a number of stores here in Manhattan, and will be on the lookout for it religiously month after month.

What is distinctive about *Hammer Horror* is its attention to detail, a balance of exciting layouts and in-depth material. After two issues, I'm impressed with the revelation that the best horror films were apparently made by people with no particular interest in the genre. These were all artists who would have chosen another path, but embraced what they were given and did quality work. Unlike today's directors and writers who grew up watching the Hammer films, but whose love for horror and fantasy seems restricted to that thin line between homage and plagiarism, the old masters knew first and foremost how to tell a story. The Hammer films were thrilling, they were great rides, rather than the rigid slog of most contemporary fare (you fill in the titles).

Issue 1 was a pleasant surprise, and Issue 2 an improvement on the original mix. Being an ardent Barbara Shelley devotee, I was gladdened by the analysis of Cat Girl, *Dracula Prince of Darkness* and *Rampart the Mad Monk*. The breakdown of shooting days on *Dracula Prince of Darkness* was a delightful touch, and the kind of detail sorely lacking in previous Hammer coverage.

I'm feeling bold enough to make a request for an interview, or at least some news, of the lovely Carole Gray. Carole appeared in *Island of Terror* with Peter Cushing, and a few other genre titles before disappearing. Also I'd love to hear more about one of my favourite

Hammer films, *The Lost Continent*.

I wish you all at Hammer Horror the best of luck.

**Richard Harford Smith,
New York,
USA**

We have no information on the current whereabouts of Carole Gray, who is perhaps best-remembered for starring alongside Cliff Richard in *The Young Ones*. If anyone can help then please get in touch. In the meantime, *Island of Terror*, which was directed by Hammer stalwart Terence Fisher, will feature in an upcoming examination of independent production company Planet.

The *Lost Continent* doesn't feature on our forthcoming schedule, but those interested in the film should track down a copy of the latest *Little Shoppe of Horrors* which includes some excellent material on the film's sometimes notorious production.

It was with great interest that I read the first two issues of *Hammer Horror*. I am writing to ask if you can hopefully shed some light on my query concerning the late Peter Cushing. When I was a lad, I started work as a projectionist at the then Atherley Cinema in Southampton. I am sure the first film being shown when I stepped in the projection room was *Corruption*. I think it was about a photographer (Peter Cushing) trying to re-make Sue Lloyd's face after she has had an accident with a falling photographic lamp. But I can't find it in any video shop, or indeed any evidence to suggest the film ever existed. Have I imagined it? Please can you help solve this mystery.

**R M Fitzgerald,
Southampton**



You certainly didn't imagine this surprisingly brutal film, which still makes for disturbing viewing today. *Corruption* was released in 1966, and starred Peter Cushing as a plastic surgeon and Sue Lloyd as his disgruntled girlfriend. It was directed by Robert Hartford-Davies who, the following year, again cast Cushing in the similarly obscure *Incarceration for the Damned*.

Corruption was produced by independent company Titus and has, as far as we know, never been released on video in this country. In Europe, however, an uncensored version of the film (featuring graphic murder sequences censored in this country) has been released under the title *Laser Killer*.



Costume Dramas

As the director of *Kiss of the Vampire*, *The Devil-Ship Pirates* and *Rasputin the Mad Monk*, **Don Sharp** handled some unusually diverse films for Hammer. He talks to **Christopher Koetting** about his work for the company, and their subsequent attempts to lure him back into the fold.

"Hammer! Don't they make horror films?" The question was posed in 1963 to agent John Redway by a young Australian émigré director who, unbeknown to him, had just had his film *The Professionals* (1960) screened to a very interested Anthony Hinds at Hammer Films. "Yes... so!" came Redway's impromptu response. The surprised Aussie could only admonish his agent. "I can't make a horror picture! I'm from the legitimate theatre!"

For renaissance man Don Sharp – Australian stage actor, British radio voice, screenplay writer, television director and helmer of second features – the chance to direct his first A-feature was tempered by the fact that his only experience with fantasy had been his two-year stint (1955-1956) as the intrepid rocketeer Mitch on the popular BBC radio series *Journey Into Space*. Sharp certainly wasn't lacking in credentials, but his lack of experience with the horror genre didn't exactly make him an obvious choice to join Hammer's ranks – a point not lost on him.

"I met with Tony Hinds and told him that I'd never seen a horror

picture. He said to me, 'Well, from what I've seen of your work I think you'd be able to handle it, but why don't I run a few for you?' So over the next few days I saw *The Curse of Frankenstein*, *Dracula* and *The Stranglers of Bombay* at Hammer House in Wardour Street. What intrigued me about them was that after about 20 minutes I was totally hooked despite a totally absurd situation. I thought it was wonderful – here was a genre with its own ground rules and self-contained world, and you could be theatrical but treat it realistically to grab the audience and make them believe something absurd. Tony and I talked about this for hours afterwards, at the end of which he said Hammer had a script he wanted me to do called *Kiss of the Vampire*."

Kiss of the Vampire had been a patchwork piece in its formative stages – culled together from disparate elements that had accumulated in the files of Hammer House since *Dracula*'s success in 1958. But right from the start Sharp made his intentions known – and they were far afield from anything resembling a makeshift piece. "What worried me was that, as Hammer progressed, the goal seemed to be for each picture

to top the one before it and they were becoming saturated with violence. So I persuaded Tony that it was better to suggest 'is it going to happen!' and give the audience a little touch of it, and then go on and really get your big shock in the end. There could be a good size shock in the middle too, but not all the time. I quoted Robert Louis Stevenson: 'To travel hopefully is better than to arrive.' He saw the point immediately and we did a rewrite to reflect this."

Sharp was to play the composition of *Kiss of the Vampire* to a distinctly Val Lewtonesque beat – the air of suggestive moodiness and foreboding was prevalent in virtually every scene, none more so than the famous prologue where the staking of a vampire shatters a sedate funeral procession. "I've always believed there needs to be a separation between suspense and shock. You lead on a mood, but if you introduce the shock moment too quickly then it's expected. It's when you hold on, keeping the same mood and tempo as the rest of the sequence, and then shatter the mood with a sudden violent moment, that it really works."

The desire to structure the picture differently from other Hammer offerings led to an altering of convention, as evil is made alluring in lead vampire Ravana's chateau, the white robes of Ravana's sect, and the bal masque. "This came in the same train of thought as not throwing buckets of blood every five minutes. Not every villain has to be a Bill Sykes. Some of the most awful corruption has been in the most respectable of places: the old Biblical thing of whited sepulchres that were shining on the outside but absolutely



corrupt underneath. Once we had that kind of approach, the whole of the designing and costuming grew from it." In vampirism's attractive face came the appeal to join what is portrayed as a literal cult, years ahead of the Anne Rices who would likewise propose bloodsucking as an alternative lifestyle. "That was Tony's idea – I queried it but he persuaded me that it would be great if, instead of just one person, there

were a whole lot of people who couldn't come out in the daylight."

For all its tension and suggestiveness, it is of course the bravura finale of a swarm of vampire bats attacking the members of Ravana's sect that endears *Kiss of the Vampire* to aficionados of horror cinema. The sequence, as Sharp attests, was not the easiest of shoots but certainly one of the most rewarding. "We had plastic bats on thin nylon rods and they were waved across from out of shot like marionettes. But they were in fairly from the front to hide the wires, and in so doing you got a very clear shadow of the bat on the wall beyond so it looked as if you had twice as many bats flying around! It was a chaotic day shooting that scene, but everyone seemed to believe that we were on to something and people started taking chances and put their all into it. So, in the most parvellous way, the sequence worked and I'm very proud of it."

Despite being shot in autumn 1962, *Kiss of the Vampire* was not





released until January 1964, during which time Sharp added the Tommy Steele musical *It's All Happening* (1963) to his repertoire. But Tony Hinds had not forgotten the fine job Sharp had performed, and he set his sights on getting Sharp to take over from John Gilling in Hammer's swashbuckler series. With their rapport firmly intact, Hinds succeeded, and in August 1963 Sharp was back at Bray Studios for *The Devil-Ship Pirates*. "Tony invited me back and this ended up as a new challenge

Below: Don Sharp releases the demanding role of Ragsdon with Christopher Lee

because Hammer would, in addition to their horror pictures, make pictures for the school holidays that had to have a "U" certificate. But they wanted it to look like an "X" film! So we had an action picture with kids in it!"

Things were a little different this time around. Instead of working with Tony Hinds as both screenwriter and producer, Sharp was now filming a Jimmy Sangster screenplay and dealing with a new producer – Anthony Nelson Keys. "Tony Keys was a general manager type and any idea he had was always the most obvious. I remember him telling me that he wanted Christopher Lee's pirate to be clad in Nue and I said, 'A blue pirate, Tony? What shall we call him, Little Boy Blue?' So he asked me what colour I wanted and I told him grey, which he thought was dull and unthreatening until I reminded him that it was threatening enough for the Nazis!"

The picture opens with a barnstorming sea battle between a naval warship and a pirate ship commandeered to fight with the Spanish Armada – all the more impressive when one realises the circumstances of its creation. "That was shot in a flooded gravel pit a couple of miles up the road from Bray. One of the reasons there was so much battle smoke was that on the other

side of the lake they were starting to build the M4 motorway, and we didn't want all the trucks in the background!" But motorway construction turned out to be the least of Sharp's problems as he tried to helm the aptly-named Devil-ship 'Diablo'. "The superstructure was designed to sit on a raft with huge petrol drums making it buoyant. It was so heavy that it took two cranes to put it into the water. On the second or third day of shooting, we had just finished a scene and someone announced that the



sea-boat was coming, so everyone rushed over to one side of the ship and tipped it over! There were bodies in the water, people swimming for shore – absolute chaos! The scaffolding went to the bottom and was there for two years with the company who owned the pit still changing hire for it!”

Fortunately for Sharp, one of the things he worried might go wrong on the film didn’t: Christopher Lee. “I had seen several of Chris’s pictures and I was worried about a range I saw as playing down one line. But right from our first meeting we got on and when we talked, it was two actors talking! We’d explore his character and I found myself suggesting depths to Captain Robeles that I hadn’t expected I’d be able to do. Chris is tremendously professional and can essay roles that are charming and threatening at the same time – he has a lovely stillness about him. He’s a very commanding presence.”

The next two years would remove Don Sharp from Bray Studios and Hammer, and immediately put him in the service of Hollywood old boy (and former Hammer partner) Robert Lippert, now once again producing in England, for whom he directed the low-budget but well-regarded horror film *Witchcraft* (1964). After extensive second-unit work on *Those Magnificent Men in Their Flying Machines* (1965), Sharp returned to Lippert for the science-fiction semi-sequel *Curse of the Fly* (1965). His next film would be the first of four pictures for maverick independent producer Harry Alan Towers – *The Face of Fu Manchu* (1965), starring Christopher Lee. At the conclusion of *Fu Manchu’s* Irish shoot, Sharp was looking forward to reuniting with Hammer at last for a film he had agreed to do before leaving for Dublin: *Rasputin the Mad Monk*. Unfortunately, the picture he went back to in June 1965 was not the one he thought he had signed up for, inheriting as he did the whole of *Dracula Prince of Darkness* – cast, crew and sets. And a smaller budget into the bargain.

“Tony Hands came to me and said we were running over budget and asked for my input on scenes that had to be cut to compensate. So we ended up losing a whole ballroom set and cutting scenes involving the Tsar’s court. Originally the part for Genevieve Asherson as the Tsarina was intended to be bigger,

“It was a Hammer picture made for a Hammer audience. It was an entertainment – so you had to take the real possibility of Rasputin’s hypnotic power and treat it as fiction.”

about a number of things to do with a picture with Tony Hands, but Tony Hands didn’t know what the hell you were talking about. He really didn’t seem to care – he was only interested in getting things done on budget and schedule.”

As if this wasn’t bad enough, Russian Prince Yousouppoff, who had sued MGM in 1932 over *Rasputin and the Empress* and won, decided this production too would have to answer to him. “Just before we went on the floor, we had trouble with



Above, from left to right: Don Sharp, producer Anthony Nelson Keys and cameraman Arthur Grant take a break from shooting *Rasputin the Mad Monk* outside Bray Studios





"Barbara was reticent about her nude scene," Don Sharp recalls, "but when we took a lot of people off the set and I assured her that it would be tastefully done, she really went for it."

Yousefpoli's lawyers and we had to do a major reconstruction of the script: things like people's names and the manner of Rasputin's death had to be changed. The script then had a disclaimer." Of course, making a historical biopic had never been the intention anyway. "It was a Hammer picture made for a Hammer audience. It was an entertainment - so you had to take the real possibility of Rasputin's hypnotic power and treat it as fiction."

An entertainment it may have been, but asking actress Barbara

Shelley - as the Tsarina's lady-in-waiting - to disrobe before her lover Rasputin had to be undertaken with the utmost seriousness. "Barbara was reticent about her nude scene, but when we took a lot of people off the set and I assured her that it would be tastefully done, she really went for it. I found her a defensive personality until you gained her trust, after which time she was a total delight."

On the male front, Rasputin was Sharp's third film with Christopher Lee, and he was able to work with the actor on a role that Lee had coveted and to which he was obviously willing to give his all. "There was total trust between us. We worked out on an empty set how exactly to play the hypnotism routine, and he used to be quite exhausted after filming some of those sequences. Everybody knew this was a terrific performance, even the people who thought, 'Not Chris Lee again.' Chris always did a lot of research on his roles, and he talked quite a lot about aspects of Rasputin that weren't in the script but just interested him. He'd bring up little anecdotes from his readings and I'd either say, 'We can't show that' or 'That's a good idea, we can use an element of that.' But he was very good in that he'd always put up ideas and you'd talk it out and there'd be an agreement. Some of Rasputin's dance was a bit freewheeling, and when I did with the poisoning was to tell him to sketch out how we wanted it to start and where we wanted it to end and then just do a half-price rehearsal of what he might do in between. We then lit for that and did it following him with hand-held cameras. You can't choreograph that sort of emotion - it's like a jazz musician in that once he's got the basis of it, he takes off and you'll've just got to stay with him."

Unlike Christopher Lee, however, the practice of grounding Don Sharp before he could take flight on Rasputin continued into the editing room, where his absence due to a commitment to start filming *Our Man in Marrakesh* (1966) in Morocco for Harry Alan Towers gave Tony Nelson Keys the unopposed freedom to remove a large portion of the climactic light scene between Christopher Lee and Francis Matthews. "I was there for the first cut, but because I had to go on to Morocco, it was one of the only films I did where I wasn't present all the way through. So Tony Keys probably just got impatient in thinking the light scene went on too long and had it cut. Had it been Tony Hinds, he would've found a better way."



Rosalyn Landor and Ray Lovelace in the Hammer House of Horror episode *Guardian of the Abyss*.

With this generally unrewarding experience, Sharp had finished what would remain the last of his Hammer pictures, although Aida Young tried to coax him back into the fold to direct her debut as a fully-fledged producer: *The Vengeance of She* (1968). He would be unable to accept, however, because of his commitment to other projects, including the suspense thriller *A Taste of Excitement* (1968). But Young would not be the last person from Hammer to give Sharp a call.

In early 1971, high on the positive reviews for his stunning boat chase finale through Amsterdam in *Alistair MacLean's Puppet on a Chain* (1970), Sharp's services were sought by Hammer's new managing director, Michael Carreras, who, in the wake of the death of director Seth Holt, had been left with the unintelligible remainder of *Blood From the Mummy's Tomb*. Carreras told Sharp he could start from scratch if he so desired, but once again the timing was wrong. "Michael Carreras called me and asked me to take over from Seth, I couldn't do it, but not because I didn't want to. I had just done *Puppet* and *Karl Unger*, the producer, put me under contract to do a picture in Israel that ended up not being made."

Three years later, in late 1974, Carreras tried again. Trying to get Hammer back into the mainstream, he was preparing to launch a new horror film based on Dennis Wheatley's *To the Devil... a Daughter*. This time, Sharp was both interested and available – at least in the beginning. "Chris Lee and Tony Keys had asked me quite some time previously about doing *To the Devil... a Daughter* – their company

Charlemagne had the rights to all the Dennis Wheatley books – and nothing had happened. Then it suddenly started up again at Hammer. I wasn't happy with the way it was developing because they wanted to stay with the book and I didn't think it could be made to work properly. So I just pulled out." In January 1975, Sharp regretfully

"Roy Skeggs rang me up and said, 'We've got this series going and we want to use as many of the old Hammer directors as possible. Are you interested?'"

sent a letter to Carreras to announce his withdrawal, telling Carreras "it just isn't for me" and wishing him the best of luck. The picture was to go on the floor that September under the direction of Peter Sykes and luck would be very much in absence.

The paths of Sharp and Carreras were to cross one last time at the studios of Pinewood in 1978, where both found themselves involved in Alfred Hitchcock romances for the Rank Organisation. "Rank had gone back into production after years of doing nothing and I was asked to direct *The Thirty-Nine Steps*, but was away on location when Michael's film *The Lady Vanishes* got underway. His came straight after mine, but the whole Rank programme closed down again after four or five unsuccessful films. The guy who was in charge of production was basically just remaking his favourite childhood films." But while Sharp would continue working, Carreras was not so fortunate, and the failure of *The Lady Vanishes* was to seal his fate.

In the wake of Michael Carreras's exit from Hammer came the replacement squad of Brian Lawrence and Roy Skeggs, whose contacts at ITC fostered a new television series called *Hammer House of Horror* (1980), which was to be Sharp's Hammer swan song. "Roy Skeggs rang me up and said, 'We've got this series going and we want to use as many of the old Hammer directors as possible. Are you interested?' So I said, 'Well, yes, but I'd like to see a script first.' So he sent me a story of Devil worship – *Guardian of the Abyss* – and after a few rewrites away we went. It was a bit more ambitious than your regular television episode and was like making a mini-Hammer feature. It was a joy to do."

Sharp moved into television permanently not long after this, directing movies and mini-series in the mid-to-late 1980s like the top-rated *A Woman of Substance*, the Robert Louis Stevenson biography *Tusitala* and an early Sharon Stone effort, *Tears in the Rain*. Now retired, Sharp still remembers Hammer with affection. "Kiss of the Vampire and Devil-Skip Pirates are among the happiest movies I ever worked on. With Shepperton or Pinewood you were one of a number of pictures being made, and if you were on a small budget, you got second or third best. At Bery, when you walked through the gate, everything was on your picture. There was a family feeling about it, and a feeling of pride as well: everyone knew their craft and inspired others. It's a great sadness that Hammer had to disappear."



Photo: Christopher Lanning

Filmography

A film-directing credits and selected television work. Other television credits include editions of *The Avengers*, *The Champions* and *The Ed Sullivan Show*.

- 1952 *The Stolen Airliner*
- 1957 *Curse Her Name With Pride* (2nd Unit); *Harry Black* (2nd Unit)
- 1958 *The Adventures of Iulius: The Golden Days: The Changing Years*
- 1960 *The Professionals; Linda*
- 1962 *Two Guys Abroad: The Fast Lady* (2nd Unit); *Elle of the Vampire*
- 1963 *It's All Happening; The Devil Ship Pirates*
- 1964 *Witchcraft*
- 1965 *Those Magnificent Men In Their Flying Machines* (2nd Unit);
- 1965 *The Face of Fu Manchu; Curse of the Fly; Torment in the Mind Maze*
- 1965 *Our Man in Marrakesh; The Brides of Fu Manchu*



- 1967 *Julius Verne's Rocket to the Moon*
- 1968 *Taste of Excitement*
- 1968 *The Violent Enemy*
- 1970 *Puppet on a Chain* (2nd Unit)
- 1971 *Psychomania*
- 1972 *Dark Places*
- 1974 *Callan*
- 1975 *Hennessy*
- 1976 *The Four Fathers*
- 1976 *The Thirty-Nine Steps*
- 1979 *Bear Island*
- 1980 *Guardian of the Abyss* (Hammer House of Horror TV series)
- 1982 *Secrets of the Phantom Carriage*
- 1984 *A Woman of Substance* (mini-series); *Tusitala* (mini-series)
- 1986 *Hold the Dream* (mini-series)
- 1987 *Tears in the Rain* (TV movie)
- 1989 *Act of Will* (mini-series)



NEVER MORE...

Towards the end of this month, viewers of satellite channel Bravo will get a chance to see 1971's *I, Monster*. The film is notable for co-starring a former DJ, best-known to Hammer enthusiasts for his portrayal of Count Karnstein in *Lust For a Vampire*. **Denio Molide** talks to the mysterious **Mike Raven**, and chronicles his brief but turbulent acting career.

"I knew a very great deal about all aspects of the occult. I have one of the largest libraries in England, and I can claim to be fairly knowledgeable about almost anything in this field that you might care to mention: it's been a life-long interest. What with that, and my rather gruesome appearance, horror films were a natural," explains Mike Raven, one-time Radio 1 DJ and most elusive of all the arch-villains in the annals of Hammer heroes.

He was Count Karnstein in *Last For a Vampire*. He was Richard Enfield in *America's ill-fated version of Jekyll and Hyde* – or *Marlowe and Blake* as they were renamed in the film – *A Monster*. He was the demented sculptor Victor Clare in *Crucible of Terror*. And he was 'The Stranger' in *Disciple of Death*. He was also an author, a photographer, a flamenco guitarist, an authority on blues music, and an expert in comparative religion. But after his brief foray into horror films between 1970 and 1973, Mike Raven was heard of no more. Where did he come from, and where did he go to?

Mike Raven – real name Austin Churton Farman – was born in London in November 1924 to a family of theatricals who counted the famous Victorian playwright Sir Arthur Wing Pinero among their number. "My mother and father were both on the stage and I was born in the proverbial trunk," he recalls.

His parents died before the young Austin was into his teens and he was brought up instead by three maiden aunts. "They didn't want me to go into the theatre, so I had the standard prep school/public school education, got as far as Oxford, and then – before it became fashionable – I dropped out, largely because it was the middle of the war and I could see nothing in front of me except an infantryman's grave. I went and did what I wanted to do most: I studied to become a ballet dancer with the Ballet Rambert and, in fact, appeared with them during the war."

Raven's talent for performing soon turned to acting. "The first film I was ever in was a production called *On Approval*, which was made in 1942 at Pinewood Studios with Clive Brook, Roland Culver and Google Withers. But most of my part resided in that celebrated spot: the cutting room floor! Before I was conscripted into the army, I was in about half-a-dozen films – most of which were totally unmemorable – always playing 'cough-and-spl' parts." It was active service, rather than acting, that helped decide the aspiring thespian's next move.

"I caught rheumatic fever during the last campaign in Europe: that wasn't good for dancing, so I briefly became a stills photographer before moving into Shakespearean acting and a couple of seasons at the Old Vic. I stayed in straight acting for another few years, but the difficulty was that I looked so like Christopher Lee..." By

now, Raven had reached his full height of 6ft 3ins, and a mere two years separated herself and Lee in age. "When we were both young actors, we were frequently sent for the same part – an example being Captain Hornblower RN in 1951, where Christopher played a Spanish captain who fought a duel with Gregory Peck: I was put up for that sell-same ride! Partly because of that, I eventually moved into television production instead."

From this inauspicious beginning, the road back into films was now destined to be a circuitous one. "I wrote a book about Spain, called *Another Spain*, because my first wife was Spanish and I lived there for some time. Then I was offered the job in television. I already had a family by this time, and I wanted the regular money, so for nine years – pretty much from the beginning of independent television – I worked as a production manager for HM Tennents, who had been awarded the contract to make all the drama productions. At the end of those nine years, I was getting very fraught about being behind the cameras instead of in front of them, and at that precise moment, almost by chance, I fell into the very stars of pirate radio... I saw pirate radio as an opportunity to get back to performing, so I leapt into it, and I and a young man named Carl Dodds – he on Radio Caroline and me on Radio Atlanta – started the whole ball rolling..." In their new roles as DJs, Carl Hilton Dodds became Simon Dee and Austin Churton Farman became Mike Raven.

The pirate radio stations were so named because they broadcast on unlicensed frequencies from ships moored off the British coast. By exploiting this loophole in the law, they were able to drive a coach-and-horses through the restrictive 'needle-time' practices of the Musicians' Union, whereby BBC radio could only play a certain number of hours of recorded music, and played non-stop pop for anything up to 24 hours a day. In the process, they rode roughshod over the MCPS (Mechanical Copyright Protection Society – the music 'police' who monitored the airwaves and collected performance royalties on behalf of recording artists) as well. "I worked for over eighteen months



Mike, pictured with his wife Mandy and their sons Dominic and Benedict, in 1971.

to get the station onto the air; in fact, I raised a lot of the capital for it."

The pirates came in on the back of the Mersey Beat explosion of the early sixties and flourished for more than three years, becoming a valuable training-ground for many DJs who are still well-known today. "When you were rushing round trying to whip up interest, and you saw the opposition that was forming, you were very soon aware that you were making history. It was a colossal adventure – it really was..." Radio Atlanta eventually merged with Caroline, and Raven relocated to a disused anti-aircraft fort in the Thames Estuary which then became the base for Radio King, later Radio 350.

When the pirates were finally outlawed in the summer of 1967 by the Wilson government's Marine Broadcasting Offences Act, Raven switched to a 'legitimate' career with Radio Luxembourg before moving to the newly-formed Radio 1. "I stayed in broadcasting for nearly seven years, and when I realised I'd got a slight 'name', I felt the moment had come when I could get back to what I had wanted to do all along, which was acting. And I decided that what I really wanted to do was horror films."

"There is in everyone an inborn curiosity about the one great mystery – death. The only thing that none of us are completely sure of is what's going to happen after that point. And anything which is concerned with this has an abiding interest for the generality of mankind. Our lives are so controlled now that we're almost in cotton wool – it's possible to live your whole life without feeling pain, for the first time ever in the history of man. And the element of violence which is innate in all of us is not really catered for. I truly believe that horror films give a release for this part of human nature."

Raven was now named to designer Edna May Kilberg, whom he had christened Mandy after the radio show they did together called *Mike and Mandy*. "Since about 1968, I had begun making very serious efforts to approach anybody who was making horror pictures to try to get in. Again, the fact that I was so like Lee got in the way. But when Jimmy Sangster came to direct *Last For a Vampire*, he wanted very much to use new people, and it was his recommendation to the producers that put me into that part."

"I stayed in straight acting for another few years, but the difficulty was that I looked so much like Christopher Lee..."

"There is in everyone an inborn curiosity about the one great mystery – death. The only thing that none of us are completely sure of is what's going to happen after that point."



them to pull out and EMI took up the reins in their place. When slated director Terence Fisher pulled out also, after literally 'breaking a leg,' Saenger was asked to stand in. "I was introduced to Jerry when he was making *The Horror of Frankenstein* - and literally within three months, he was on the telephone saying he was going to do this other picture and he wanted me to be in it..."

"I largely made up the part of Count Krimstein as we went along. *Last For a Vampire* was a sequel, to *The Vampire Lovers* and there had been the embryo of this character in that [played by John Forbes-Robertson], but he wandered about, story-wise, on the edge of the plot and, indeed, some of my friends wondered what on earth he was or was doing - it was never made explicit. He

was simply called the Man in Black in that one, and when I got the script of *To Love a Vampire* [as the film was at one stage titled], it still said 'Man in Black - Count Krimstein.'"

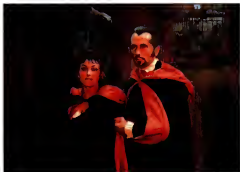
Raven signed to play the Man in Black in June 1970 and commenced his two-week rise in July. "What I tried to do was talk everybody concerned into my way of thinking - I didn't want the character to actually be a vampire. I wanted him to appear as the Devil's emissary - or an agent of evil, if you like.

I saw him as a puppet master with Yette [Stiggard] as the puppet." Even as Count Krimstein, the character still managed to hover 'on the edge of the plot' in *Lust For a Vampire*, but an extended and typically Hammeresque prologue, wherein the Count raised the long-dead Carriflin

"I didn't want the character to actually be a vampire; I wanted him to appear as the Devil's emissary - or an agent of evil, if you like."

Krimstein from the ashes of the grave, gave Raven the opportunity to show the world of horror what he was made of. "The business where I raised her from the moldering body - there was no script there at all. All the invocations I did over the body I brought out of my magical books..."

Producers Fine and Style seemed more intent on softcore porn than hardcore horror, however, and *Last For a Vampire* threw everything into the catchpenny brew in its attempt to capture a new audience for Hammer horror - including *Strange Love*, a pop song penned by Frink Godwin and sung by



Last For a Vampire had been rushed onto the Hammer schedule to cash in on the expected success of *The Vampire Lovers*, starring Ingrid Pitt, and was again the brainchild of independent producers Harry Fine and Michael Style, who in combination with writer Tudor Gates made up Fantale Productions. American International Pictures had originally been set to co-produce, as before, but the lesbian overtones of the first film had ultimately persuaded

one-bit wonder Tracy: "That horrified me more than anything in the entire film!"

By September 1970, Raven was co-starring in the Amicus film *I, Monster*, alongside Peter Cushing and... Christopher Lee. "I had a moment of worry when I found I was going to be in a film playing scenes directly opposite Christopher - I thought to myself, 'It is going to look like the Corvison Brothers!'" In fact, Raven looked rather elegant and Lee looked... well, like Lee, but with a large 'putty' nose and a set of buck-teeth. Utilising a supposedly revolutionary single-camera stereoscopic process invented by producer Milton Subotsky, *I, Monster* shot for two weeks with its 22-year-old director Stephen Weeks instructed to make as much play as possible of foreground objects to enhance the illusion of depth. But when the desired dimensional effect failed to materialise, the experiment was abruptly halted and filming was returned to normal. Most of the abortive 3-D sequences actually remain in the finished print. "The two parts were very different; in *Last For a Vampire* I was on the side of the Devil, while in *I, Monster* I had a much bigger rôle but I was a 'goodie' - so, I'm though it was to be in a film with Peter and Christopher, it was not as much fun as playing Count Karnstein."

Raven's next film was *Crucible of Terror* - a House of Wax clone in which a crazed sculptor used real bodies as the basis for his bronze statues while the undead spirit of a former victim went walkabout in the guise of a young girl, knocking off the other members of the cast. The film was devised by writer Tim Parkinson and television editor Ted Hooker, and initially floated on the promise of a loan from the National Film Finance Corporation. Parkinson and Hooker had completed their script by August 1970, but a steady decline in cinema attendances in the interim saw the market becoming increasingly glutted with the kind of exploitation

horrors which were nearly always the result of panic in the industry whenever any shortfall appeared. Consequently, the NEFFC had withdrawn their offer of finance before the end of the year, reasoning that they had already backed more than enough horror product for the time being. Instead, *Crucible of Terror* was picked up by the Glendale Productions of Peter Newbrook (who had been assistant lighting cameraman on *Lean's Doctor Zhivago*) and its budget set at around £100,000 - roughly half that of the average Hammer film of the time.

With a cast comprising Raven, Mary Maude, James Bolam, Ronald Lacey, and Dorelia's Melissa Stribling, *Crucible of Terror* went into production in July 1971 at Perranporth in North Cornwall, before settling into Shepperton Studios for the remainder of its six-week schedule. It was part of the plan that Raven would star in two more of the same if *Crucible of Terror* was a success. By this time, however, things had already begun to go wrong. *Last For a Vampire* surfaced in January 1971 with Raven's voice dubbed by Valentine Dyall. To add to the ignominy, close-ups of Christopher Lee's blood-shot eyes from *Dracula Has Risen From the Grave* had been spliced into the final cut in place of his own. In addition, the eight months leading up to its release had witnessed the opening of Hammer's *Taste the Blood of Dracula*, *Crescendo*, *The Vampire Lovers*, *Scars of Dracula*, and *The Horror of Frankenstein*, as well as AIP's *Count Yeggo - Vampire and Cry of the Banshee*, and MGM's *House of Dark Shadows*. And while *The Vampire Lovers* was still playing in London's West End at Cinescra 4, hot on the heels of *Last For a Vampire* came *Countess Dracula* (also with Ingrid Pitt), and Amicus's *The House That Dropped Blood* (Pitt again).

There had never been exploitation like it, and the low-office returns had begun to tell their own story. "I'd already heard a rumour that AIP weren't going to make any more horror films," Raven recalls. In consequence of this (and the impending release of Hammer's own Jekyll and Hyde variant,



Lee (above) with Christopher Lee - Peter Cushing - Paul Martin "I, MONSTER" Directed by Stephen Weeks Produced by Milton Subotsky



Above: Uterson (Peter Cushing), Crawford (Mike Raven) and Dr Lanyon (Richard Harris) in a scene from 'I, Monster'

Left: Christopher Lee with director Stephen Weeks during production of 'I, Monster'



Mike Raven as Victor Clew in 'Crucible of Terror'



The Disciple at Devlin press book cover.

Dr Jekyll & Sister Hyde), British Lion shelved *I, Monster* – eventually putting it out on the lower half of a double-bill with another Fine-Style-Gates Fastlane production: *Bright*. But even then, *I, Monster* only played part of the ABC circuit.

With *Crucible of Terror* not scheduled for a release (through Scotsa Barber) until the following year, enough of a 'gap' had now surfaced in Raven's plan of attack for him to have seemed to disappear from public view. *Crucible of Terror* opened on 13th April 1972 – and closed. Glendale promptly jettisoned any thought of using him again, going instead to Robert Stephens to bolster their last gasp in the genre with *The Asphyls*.

After producing *Countless Draculas*, Alexander Paul – whose own association with Hammer went back to 1952 and Monty – entertained the notion of

filming the story of Vlad Tepes, the supposed real-life Dracula, on location in Transylvania with Raven in the lead. "Paul was trying to get the Carreras stamp to make it a Hammer film." The idea was mooted to James Carreras, but the Hammer chief was having a tricky time with his own 'real' Dracula by then, and the pretensions of Mandy

"I was the only one of those actors – Cushing, Lee, Vincent Price – who would have been in horror films by choice. I began with the interest, and then wished to transfer it into making pictures..."

Raven over the dubbing of her husband's voice in *Last For a Vampire* soon put paid to the idea.

Raven remained undeterred. "I wanted very much to write my own horror films – ultimately to write, direct, and act in my own horror films..." He had written a script that had interested Jimmy Sangster sufficiently for him to take it to Carreras. "I tried to write a genuine Gothic tale without using either of the two standard prototypes – *Frankenstein* or *Dracula*. What I tried to do was produce an original tale which contained the elements that should go into a Gothic, yet would come across as completely fresh and unusual." Hammer provisionally allocated *Disciple of Death* a start-date in September of 1971, but by August, they were sitting on six more unreleased horror films of their own and were having as hard a time as anyone trying to muster enthusiasm among potential distributors. Again, the plug was pulled.



Above: The Stranger (Mik) drinks human blood during one of *Disciple of Death*'s lurid magic ceremonies.

In the meanwhile, Raven had given up his proverbial day job as host of *The Rhythm and Blues Show*, and with half of the finance now arranged through a merchant bank, and the remainder put up by Raven and his co-producer Tom Parkinson, *Disciple of Death* went ahead regardless in the spring of 1972. But even as their new film commenced in production, the bottom had already fallen out of horror's 'mini-boom' of the 1970s.

Made on a minuscule budget of £50,000, and again shot mostly on location in Cornwall on Super 16mm (instead of the regulation 35mm), *Disciple of Death* was an unmitigated disaster. Ronald Lacey (who was subsequently to find more enduring fame as the villain of *Raiders of the Lost Ark*) added weight to the cast, but the poverty of the film's execution was later reflected in negligible distribution (through what few independent chains still remained) and correspondingly bad box-office. It bombed out of sight, and another planned 'second stab' – also with Parkinson – was abandoned in short order as a result. Had his earlier Hammer or Arisarc films fared better, Raven's name might have been worth more on the marquee, but neither of them had stirred up much interest in the self-styled 'new face' of British horror films. *Disciple of Death* remains notable for having offered a small rôle to Louise Jameson, who was later to play Leela opposite Tom Baker in *Doctor Who*.

"I'd willingly accept the risk of starvation as long as I can have the freedom that goes with it," Raven said at the time. Having given up his job with Radio 1 only to see his emergent career as a horror star evaporate within the space of a mere three years, Raven decided that enough was enough. "I was the only one of those actors – Cushing, Lee, Vincent Price – who would have been in horror films by choice. I began with the interest, and then wished to transfer it into making pictures..." But it was not to be. A television series called *The Ten Commandments*, which he had hosted for ITV's Sunday evening 'God-slot' in the period between *Crucible of Terror* and *Disciple of Death*, as well as two dozen editions of *Epique*, had also led to nothing more concrete so, in the summer of 1973, Raven took what remained of his money and ran to the sanctity of the small cottage that he had purchased near

Boscawen in Cornwall with part of the proceeds from *Crucible of Terror*. There, he spent his time lobster fishing and writing operettas, before eventually turning his hand to sheep-farming and sculpture as *la Violette* Clare. These pieces, carved entirely in wood, are exceptional.

Raven subsequently moved to a nearby hill-farm, where he, Mandy, and some two hundred sheep, finally settled in splendid isolation and peaceful seclusion.





Neither Mad nor a Monk

Jonathan Rigby traces the man behind the myth.

Rasputin and the Empress will leave an impression on the American mind which fifty years of education cannot efface... From beginning to end it is a concoction of myths." Such was the prophetic comment made by the *Hollywood Spectator* when faced with MGM's pseudo-historical extravaganza of 1932. The diabolical glamour that still surrounds the name of Rasputin is, indeed, a triumphant example of our preference for popular myth over historical fact.

Like so much else about him, Rasputin's year of birth is a matter for dispute; sources range widely between 1862 and 1871. Born Grigori Yefimovich into a peasant family at Pokrovskoe in western Siberia, he coupled a youthful reputation for second sight with a wild and sexually promiscuous lifestyle.

'Rasputin' was, in fact, a nickname meaning 'dissolute'. Having spent three months at the monastery of Verkhoturye, he returned a changed man (though not, and indeed never, a monk.) Having acquired a local reputation as a holy man, or 'stannik', he finally arrived in St Petersburg in 1903.

Word of the new wonder-worker soon spread, and he first appeared at the Imperial Palace on 18th July 1907. Three-year-old Prince Alexis, a haemophilic, had developed an internal haemorrhage after a bad fall. Rasputin succeeded in saving him where orthodox medicine failed, and thus began his strong influence at court, particularly over the devoted Tsarina.

His sexual profligacy continued as before – with society ladies now rather than gypsies – and, though a virulent press campaign advertised the fact, the Tsarina would hear nothing against him. Her veneration of 'our friend' became all the greater when the Tsarevitch fell a second time and, on receipt of a telegram from Rasputin, recovered again. During an absence from St Petersburg, however, Rasputin was savagely stabbed by Chlona Guseva, an insane ex-prostitute who was probably a tool of some larger plot.

When Germany declared war on Russia on 1st August 1914, Rasputin – a committed pacifist as well as a passionate opponent of anti-Semitism and other social evils – wrote to warn the Tsar that 'with war will come the end of Russia – and yourselves.' The press, meanwhile, continued to stir up public indignation against him, his meddling in state affairs seeming all the more conspicuous now that the Tsar was away at the front. His penchant for having ministers replaced by his own favourites was not always well-advised, in any case; a further plot against his life, though farcically bungled, was instigated by his own appointees.

It was a group of aristocrats that finally succeeded in removing Rasputin. On the night of 16th December 1916, Prince Felix Yusupov lured Rasputin to the basement of his home, apparently to meet his wife, Princess Irina. Upstairs, the other conspirators – Soukhom, Potrichkevich and the Grand Duke Dimitri Pavlovich – endeavoured to give the impression that a party was in progress with the assistance of a single gramophone record: *Yankee Doodle Come to Town*. Cakes and madeira wine had earlier been laced by a Dr Lazarev with massive doses of cyanide. When Rasputin had partaken freely of both with no apparent ill-effects, the stupefied Yusupov called on his friends for assistance. Between them they repeatedly shot Rasputin, kicked him in the temples, frenetically beat him about the head with a rubber couch, and finally dumped him over the Petrovsky Bridge and through the ice of the River Neva. Winter discovered in Rasputin's lungs at autopsy indicated that, for all the conspirators' squalid and brutal efforts, he had still been alive when he entered the water.

So... 'Unspeakeable Background' (Christopher Hill) or 'no diabolical schemer' (Colin Wilson)? Whether Rasputin's influence was malign or beneficent will probably never be disentangled from the elaborate mythology that has grown up around him. His gifts of hypnosis and healing appear to have been genuine, however, as do his powers of precognition. Among the dead man's papers was found a note addressed to the Tsar. In it, Rasputin predicted that his own death by violence would occur before 1st January 1917, and that if he died at the hands of aristocrats 'none of your children or relations will remain alive for more than two years.' The Russian royal family was murdered en masse by the Bolsheviks on 16th July 1918.

Rasputin, the Royal Family and 'Veidt Fright'



One celluloid misrepresentation of the Rasputin story answered to more than just film critics. Jonathan Rigby investigates.

The legend of Rasputin took rapid, and fanciful, shape from the very moment his frozen corpse was recovered from the River Neva, and by 1932 - after several silent appearances - the legend was ready to grace the talking screen. Two films on

the subject were made that year, but from very different perspectives.

Adolph Trotz's *Rasputin, der Uglyvönke Zar* (*Rasputin, the Uncrowned Tsar*) was produced by Gottschalk-Film of Germany and was also known under the nicer title of *Rasputin, Demon der Frauen* (*Rasputin, Demon with Women*). It starred Conrad Veidt (1893-1943), whose position as the first bona fide 'horror' star is often overlooked today. Almost uniquely, the film attempted to show Rasputin in an objective light, stressing his efforts to avert Russia's involvement in the First World War. Osip Dymov, a well-known Russian writer who had known the real Rasputin, assisted with the screenplay, and, despite Veidt's sympathetic approach to Rasputin, every effort was made, in an elaborate three-hour make-up job, to accentuate Veidt's already demonic appearance.

Two Rasputins, past and future, would meet on Wentworth golf course in the summer of 1939, when the teenage Christopher Lee was rhaphodising to a family friend about 'Conrad Veidt, the wonderful actor on whom, had I wanted to go into films, I should have most wanted to model myself...' When 'Connie' himself emerged from a nearby bunker, Lee recalls in his autobiography, 'we gaped at him open-mouthed as he shook us by the hand and interrupted his game for half an hour to chat.'

Next up in 1932 - released, in fact, on 23rd December - was MGM's *Rasputin and the Empress*. Though they were known as 'The Royal Family' to Broadway audiences, this film marked the first joint appearance of John, Lionel and Ethel Barrymore. This casting coup was bad news for Bela Lugosi, who had been rumored to be a front-runner for the rôle of Rasputin.

The first of many obstacles for MGM was Ethel's well-known distaste for the film medium. 'Lionel and I,' explained John, 'see

no debasing of our so-called art when we allow our histrionic antics to be recorded on celluloid and packed in tins like pineapple, to be shipped to all parts of the world. We feel it better to appear in five thousand movie houses at once, before a million patrons, than in one theatre before a thousand. But Ethel doesn't see it that way.' A demand from the Internal Revenue Service for additional tax

payments for the years 1921 to 1929 helped Ethel to see things differently, and accordingly she was cast as the Tsarina Alexandra, whom she had met several times in London. Lionel was cast as Rasputin; John, after all, had played another bearded 'evil genius' the year before in *Svengoli*, and in any case his famous profile was put to better use in the rôle of Prince Chogoditoff, a thinly-disguised Yousoufouf.

'The only thing I quarrelled with,' recalled Ethel, 'was some parts of the story which I didn't think should be done. After I left they were done, and the company was sued because of them and had to pay heavy damages.' MGM supervisor Bernie Hyman had cut his own throat when he prefaced the film with the rubric, 'This concerns the destruction of an empire, brought about by the mad ambition of one man. A few of the characters are still alive. The rest met death by violence.' As Hyman was to find out to his cost, some of them were most definitely still alive, and litigious.

'The mad ambition of one man...' This was the image which stuck. At least in the various distorted film versions of Rasputin's life he had the distinction of being interpreted by cinematic giants like Veidt, Barrymore and Lee. There were to be far worse posthumous indignities, culminating in the pop charts of 1978. No one - be they saint, sinner or something in between - deserves to be immortalised for an entire generation in Boney M's vacuous schrein, 'Rah-rah-Rasputin, Russia's greatest love machine...'

NEW YORK, SATURDAY, OCTOBER 16, 1968.

A Rasputin Assassin Is Here to Sue C.B.S.

Sees a Court Replay of Film He Charges Invaded Privacy

By ROBERT E. TOMLINSON

A film, 19-year-old Russian prince met in a courtroom here yesterday and watched a film depicting his role in the Russian assassination of Rasputin, the "mad monk."

Without a trace of emotion, Prince Felix Yousoufouf viewed the film as his suit for \$1.5 million in damages against the Columbia Broadcasting System, for invasion of privacy went to trial in State Supreme Court.

Felix held an hour, a heated overture, filled with language, from a paroled high school, viewed the last-minute dramatization of how the prince and three other conspirators killed Rasputin in the Yousoufouf palace in St. Petersburg (now Leningrad) 19 years ago and then poisoned, shot and beat him to death.

The prince maintained only that he had a leading role in the assassination in December, 1918, but also that he died the last blow with a heavy stick after dodging the sword to his death.

The film was televised by C.B.S. on June 5, 1965, Yousoufouf's attorney, however, was the first time Prince Yousoufouf had seen it.

However, the prince charged in his suit that the film was an



Prince Felix Yousoufouf and his wife, Princess Irene, in audience at State Supreme Court.

unauthorized, partly inaccurate, commercial exploitation of his name and thereby violated his right to privacy. He also attacks the film's contention that he used his wife, Princess Irene, as a "seductive bait" to lure Rasputin to his death.

The case is of legal interest, because it does not involve libel or property rights in a personal story, but hinges rather on the privilege of privacy, a still-developing concept.

Once an admitted assassin, or assassin, as the defense

described him yesterday, now the right to privacy demands for the unauthorized revealing of his name, or name, or? Or does the bitterest implications of his case place it in the public domain and thereby make it available material for writers?

Asked about the price, Felix is a longtime Jewellery shop during the opening arguments.

Continued on Page 16, Column 2

Prince Felix and Princess Irene (top) in New York to sue CBS for invasion of privacy over their TV movie 'I Should Die'. Their efforts were in vain.

"Is he a faker, is he
from the Devil or is
he from the powers
of good?"

Don Sharp, August 1965

RASPUTIN —THE MAD MONK



SCREENPLAY BY JOHN DILLON. FILM BY DON SHARP. A LIONEL LINCOLN PRODUCTION

RASPUTIN—THE MAD MONK Starring **CHRISTOPHER LEE**

and **BARBARA SHELLEY · RICHARD PASCO · FRANCIS MATTHEWS · SUZAN FARMER**
DIMSDALE LANDEN · RENEE ASHERSON Directed by JOHN DILLON. Produced by LIONEL LINCOLN. Screenplay by JOHN DILLON. Music by JOHN WILLIAMS. Edited by DON SHARP. Released by LIONEL LINCOLN. © 1965 LIONEL LINCOLN. All Rights Reserved.



RASPUTIN THE MAD MONK

Cast and credits

Rasputin	Christopher Lee
Sonia	Borbor Shelley
Dr Zargo	Richard Pasco
Ivna	Francis Matthews
Vaessa	Susan Farmer
Peter	Dinsdale Landon *
Tsarina	Rene Asherson
Jankeeper	Derek Francis
The Bishop	Joss Ackland
Tsarevitch [Nicholas]	Robert Duncan
Paltra	Alan Tilverd
The Abbot	John Welsh
Court Physician [Dr Siglow]	John Boley
Doctor	Michael Godfrey *
Woman [Anan]	Ukhnova *
Burly Brate [Vassily's father]	Brian Wilde *
Sea [Michael]	Michael Codman *
Daughter [Tania]	Fiona Hartford *
Young Tough [Vassily]	Bryon Marshall
Wiggoner	Bartlett Mullins *
First Tart	Helen Christie *
Second Tart	Maggie Wright *
Foxy Face	Cyril Shops *
Cheeky Man	Ukhnova *
Minister	Ukhnova *
Fat Lady	Celia Ryder *
Young Girl	Veronica Nicholson *
Wide Eyes	Lucy Fleming *

Music Composed by
Musical Supervisor
Director of Photography
Production Designer
Supervising Editor
Production Manager
Editor
Assistant Director
Camera Operator
Art Director
Sound Recordist
Sound Editor
Continuity
Make-up
Hair Stylist
Wardrobe
Screenplay by
Executive Producer
Produced by
Directed by

Don Banks
Philip Mortell
Michael Reed
Bernard Robinson
James Needs
Ross MacKenzie
Roy Hyde
Bert Ball
Coco Cooney
Don Mingoye
Ken Rawkins
Roy Baker
Lara Schwa
Roy Ashton
Friedo Steiger
Rosemary Burrows
John Elder ♦
Anthony Hinds ♦
Anthony Nelson Keys
Don Sharp

* Uncredited in finished print

♦ Pseudonym for Anthony Hinds

† Credited as Nicholas Pennell in American press book

Character names and credits taken from press book, shooting script and director's notes; credit order from film print, then in order of appearance. Names in square brackets are given in on-screen dialogue but uncredited.

Associated British Productions Limited presents

A Hammer Film Production

Produced at EMI Studios, England

Released through Warner-Pathe Distributors Limited

Certificate 'X'

Duration 91 minutes, length 8,196 feet

Cinemascope

Technicolor

RCA Sound System

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No living person is portrayed or referred to in this film.



The Characters

RASPUTIN



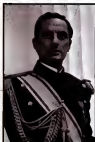
"What do we have senses for if not to use them? To feel, taste, touch, strobe . . . crush." It's hardly surprising when a man who can't distinguish between stroking and crushing turns out to be a potent blend of megalomaniac, misogynist, manipulator and murderer. His healing gifts are squandered in the small-minded pursuit of physical pleasure and political power. And, though abundantly supplied with fawning society women, it's the prospect of another meaningless sexual conquest (this time of Vanessa) that proves his final undoing.

SONIA

"I disgust myself."

A text-book case of a 'woman who loves too much', Sonia yearns for more excitement than her duties as lady-in-waiting to the Tsarina can provide. Keen to try the Café Trigane's extra-strong vodka, it turns out to be too much for her; in the same way, her liaison with Rasputin sends her into a self-destructive downward spiral. Rasputin doesn't really need to hypnotise her into killing herself – he's killed her vulnerable spirit already.

DR ZARGO



"I admit that I have been drinking, but only enough to see things for what they really are." Having been struck off after some unspecified medical scandal, Zargo claims to have "died a long time ago". Devoted only to alcoholic self-abasement and mysterious chemical experiments, Zargo is ideally suited for the rôle of unwitting accomplice to a power-crazed monster. And in traditional style, exposure to the monster so restores his moral fibre that he nobly lays down the life he previously thought wasn't worth living.

IVAN

"Of course, one must keep up appearances – the family honour and all that." Merely scrupulous and even a little prissy, Ivan is slow to be convinced of the need for Rasputin's removal. He only really commits himself on discovering the acid-scarred Peter exsanguine in the snow. Before this, however, he has shown fine dramatic gifts in the key performance he puts on to ensnare Rasputin. Though how comfortable he feels pretending to pimp for his own sister is not so clear.

VANESSA



"I think we're all better off by being well away from that horrid place." We know that Vanessa disapproves of the Café Trigane, but beyond that she's something of a mystery. Given her instinctive loathing of Rasputin, she is presumably appalled by Sonia's infatuation with him, but, in fact, we can't be sure that she even knows about it. And what does she think of her brother using her as bait in the assassination plot? We will never know.

PETER

"I tell you, Ivan, Rasputin is using the Tsarina for his own filthy ends!" Explosive but ineffectual, Peter hates Rasputin on sight and is the first to propose his elimination. The real motive for this violent antipathy perhaps derives from his decidedly equivocal feelings for his sister, Sonia, and his demise, with vitriol flung in his face, seems horribly appropriate for so hot-headed a character.

THE TSARINA



"Greed, ambition, corruption – my court is full of it." A delicate creature, the Tsarina seems to be fading away before our eyes. Dismayed by the moral degeneracy of her court and country, she shows herself to be a very poor judge of character when she hails Rasputin as the antidote to it. Sceptical of her doctors, she is quickly in Rasputin's thrall and seems set to follow in Sonia's disastrous footsteps when events take a dramatic turn.

DR SIGLOV

"You take care, too, Rasputin – you're treading on too many people. Before long, one of them may turn violent . . ." Thanks to the Tsarina, there's no real contest between Dr Siglov's conventional medicine and Rasputin's miraculous variety. Cheated of the chance to test the "new ray apparatus" on the Tsarevitch – and later relieved of his job – Siglov becomes convinced that the Tsarina is mad as well as stupid. He's also moved to utter a dire, and ultimately prophetic, warning . . .



The Story

Russia, the early twentieth century. At a rural inn, a country doctor takes his leave of the fever-ridden landlady's bedside, unable to do anything more for the invalid. The innkeeper prays for deliverance before a religious icon.

Downstairs, the door is swung violently open and in strides Rasputin, a wild-eyed occasional patron of the inn. Learning that sickness in the house prevents him getting a drink, he makes his way upstairs to the bedroom where he mystically draws the woman's fever out with his hands, demanding only wine and Bacchanalian celebration in payment. The meretricious duly commences. Later, while the party is in full swing, Rasputin attempts to

struck-off alcoholic Dr Boris Zargo, and is winning easily when four thrill-seeking well-to-do youngbloods enter: Sonia and Vanessa, ladies-in-waiting to the Tsarina, and their brothers, ex-student chums Peter Vassilievitch and Ivan Ksenikov. Rasputin is insulted by a vodka-swilling Sonia's perceived slight against his style of dancing, and demands an apology of her: "You will come to me and say you are sorry." A retraction isn't forthcoming, but after a night disturbed by recurring visions of the entrancing stranger, Sonia, via the Patron of the Tsarina, traces him to Dr Zargo's filthy basement above a horsemeat butchers'. Initially harsh toward her, Rasputin's mood mellows when he learns of her position within Court circles. He seduces her, later giving her a series of mystic instructions. Under his influence, Sonia pushes the Tsarina's young son, Alexis, over a parapet overlooking a frozen moat. The Court Physician is helpless to assist; now gravely ill, national prayers are read for the young heir. Still entranced, Sonia tells the Tsarina that she knows of only one man who could save her son - Rasputin.

Duly summoned, Rasputin uses his mysterious healing powers to restore the Tsarevich back to full health. He spurns a reward, but the Tsarina insists that Sonia goes to him and forces him to accept a boon - a magnificent villa where the wily Rasputin sets up practice as a faith healer. He quickly carves himself a niche amongst the pampered ladies of the aristocracy, who flock to his 'clinic'. His hold extends to the Tsarina, whom he persuades to accept the increasingly unimpressed Zargo as her personal physician; she sacks Court Physician Siglov. Meanwhile, the embittered and fearful Peter goes to Ivan, seeking assistance to rid the world of Rasputin. Rasputin's attentions have strayed from the besotted Sonia; despairing of his indifference and coldness toward her, she makes an hysterical plea to him. He spurns her, saying he will only receive her again if she brings him Vanessa. She attacks him, but his response is to order her to leave and destroy herself...

Appalled, Zargo leaves Rasputin's villa, declaring him insane. He dreams his sorrows at the Tsarine where, by chance, he encounters Peter and Ivan. Together, they hatch an assassination plot, using Vanessa as carnal bait to lure Rasputin. Peter learns of Rasputin's instruction to Sonia; he rushes to her, only to find her corpse, wrists slit, drained of blood. Grief-stricken, Peter goes armed and alone to Rasputin's darkened villa where he ends up blundering blindly outside after receiving a face full of acid

courtesy of the bearded villain. Next morning - and unaware of Peter's fate - Ivan goes to Rasputin and puts his and Zargo's plot in motion, promising Vanessa for Rasputin that night at his home. Later, Rasputin makes the rendezvous but is left waiting alone with a decanter of poisoned wine and a box of poisoned chocolates laid out before him, which he dutifully consumes while Zargo, hiding in an alcove, looks on. Rasputin collapses choking and Zargo goes to his prone body, but Rasputin raises himself and advances upon the terrified doctor, who promptly plunges the cyanide-laden hypodermic needle he'd used to poison the chocolates into the back of Rasputin's neck. Outside

the police, Ivan finds the scared and mortally wounded Peter. He runs back into the chambers, to find the petrified Zargo babbling that Rasputin won't die. Rasputin hurls a knife into Zargo's back, felling him; the giant then attempts to push Ivan out of the parapet window. With a last almighty effort, Zargo helps Ivan to overpower Rasputin, who falls from the window to his doom on the frozen moat below. Ivan is left alone with Zargo's bloodied cadaver.



seduce the innkeeper's daughter, Tania, in the barn. They are caught on flagrant by a young tough, Tania's jealous intended, Vassily, who attacks Rasputin with a stick. A fight ensues and Rasputin severs Vassily's hand with the weapon. The wounded Vassily stumbles away into the night. When the innkeeper and friends arrive, armed with pitchforks, they discover Rasputin about to rape Tania. Rasputin fights them off, disappearing through a hole in the roof. As he gallops away on horseback, the innkeeper's son, Michael, finds the rosary which Rasputin had lost in the melee. Rasputin, meanwhile, steals back into the monastery where he is resident.

Summoned before the Abbot and brought to book for the evening's incidents, Rasputin vows to use his powers for good or ill, abandons his monastic duties, and departs on a waggoner's horse and cart to travel to St. Petersburg. In a basement bar, the Café Tsarine, he is challenged by a 'foul-faced' man to enter into a drinking competition with disgraced,



In Production

"Healer and rapist, peasant and seer, Rasputin was a legendary enigma, a real actor's part, one of the best I'd had."

— Christopher Lee



(‘holy man’) who’d held the last Tsar, Nicholas II (and by proxy the whole Russian Empire) in his thrall for eleven years. The mother tells her son that in years to come, he will remember the meeting. The boy was destined to play Rasputin in a film over thirty years later. His name was Christopher Lee...

Many had attempted to portray the life and death of Rasputin on the cinema screen; the notorious ‘mad monk’ (a favoured epithet, despite his never having taken holy orders) hit his peak of infamy as the silent cinema floundered, and numerous sensational shorts luridly chronicling aspects of his overlordship at the court of Nicholas and Alexandra were produced, amongst them Max Neufeld’s 1917 German telling, *Rasputin the Holy Sinner*, Arthur Ashley’s *Rasputin, The Black Monk* the same year, Austria’s *Rasputin* (*Das Liebesleben des Sonderbaren Heiligen*) (*The Love Life of a Strange Holy Man*) in 1925; 1928’s *Rasputin’s Liebesabenteuer* (*Rasputin’s Love Adventure*, aka *Rasputin, the Holy Devil*), directed by Martin Berger; *Rasputin the Prince of Sinners*, a USSR version directed by Nikolai Lavrin the following year; and 1930’s *Rasputin, Dämon der Frauen* (*Rasputin, Demon With Women*), directed by Germany’s Adolf Trotz with the legendary Conrad Veidt in the title rôle. However, it was the furor surrounding MGM’s *Rasputin and the Empress*, released in 1932, which cast a long shadow over subsequent attempts to film the story.

The film (known, confusingly, as *Rasputin the Mad Monk* in the British Isles), featured members of the Barrymore acting dynasty. A lawsuit was brought by the Princess Irina Yousouppoff against MGM; the assassin’s wife took exception to a sequence in which the character most identified with herself, Natasha, was apparently raped by Rasputin. She’d never actually met him. After a long and well publicised trial in 1934, the jury found in her favour and she received £25,000 in damages. Sir David Napley’s

London, the late twenties. A small boy, asleep in the bedroom of a smart town house, is woken by his mother and taken downstairs to the drawing-room to meet two distinguished friends of the family, two émigré Russians – the Prince Yousouppoff and the Grand Duke Dmitry Pavlovich. The two men are notorious for being among the assassins of Grigori Yefimovitch Rasputin, the mystic and self-styled staretz

therefore of paramount consideration when Hammer began preparing their version of the story in 1964-5 (two bowdlerised French versions had appeared in 1939 and 1954 respectively). The Yousouppoffs were still very much alive at the time, and still zealously protective of their reputations. Felix had written two books on the subject: *Rasputin*, published 1927; and *Lost Splendour*, published 1953. Honest and frank accounts, Anthony Hinds drew extensively upon these and others in preparing his screenplay.

The Script

"This is an entertainment, not a documentary. No attempt has been made at historical accuracy... all the characters and incidents may be regarded as fictitious."

— John Elder, first page of shooting script

"We had problems just before we started with the descendants of the Prince," asserts director Don Sharp. "We had to alter a great deal of history and make it into a fictional story. We ended up just using the ending that we had started with. It was a pity because we had a very good script to start with. But the legal problems were just too much."

The eventual shooting script contains several scenes foreshortened, curtailed, or omitted.



altogether from the final print. According to Sharp, budgetary overspends on *Dracula Prince of Darkness* and *The Plague of the Zombies* were to blame. "We were cutting as we went along, and this affected quite a bit of what we were trying to do. It was a real shame. If we hadn't had to do the rewrites or deal with the budget cuts, we could have had a real first class production. Christopher Lee gave an incredible performance, but everything around him was sort of slapdash. It was one of my great disappointments. It was a little too big for Hammer's resources."

An early scene was cut which draws out the identification of Rasputin as the bearded stranger at the inn; come the morning, Rasputin is met by two monks who ask after his missing rosary, one of whom produces the offending item. Lost too was the original climax of the Abbots' confrontation with Rasputin, which would have ended with an "amused" Rasputin leaving the Abbot, the inkcooper, and the Barly Bruce (Vassily's father) on their knees and praying for his soul. Amended was the beginning of the scene at the Tzigane where the Tsarina's messenger first approaches Rasputin, Rasputin, Zargo, and the two prostitutes enjoying a big bowl of bouillabaisse, with Rasputin forcing his "slippery friend," a "revolting-looking piece of fish," into the gullet of one of the tarts. Zargo would have bemoaned that their money had run out, prompting Rasputin to utter: "Plenty more where that came from. I have only to snap my fingers." Cue Zargo's dry response: "Start snapping. There's not a kopeck left."

Some gossiping innuendo was snipped from the conversation of the ladies waiting in line at Rasputin's clinic ("Did you know the Tsarina comes here twice a week. They say he has great influence over her." "That's not all they say...") plus the fact that Rasputin was changing "Fifty roubles a consultation." More substantially, a long scene between Vanessa and the Tsarina was lost entirely. Taking place immediately after Rasputin's mesmerism of the Tsarina, she and Vanessa would have been travelling in the Tsarina's carriage when Vanessa attempts to discourage her employer from accepting Rasputin's counsel: "His behaviour with women is disgraceful. He is a drunkard who frequents low taverns... a charlatan, a trickster..." Her outburst would prompt the Tsarina's tight-lipped response: "You'll me [sic] very cross in a moment, child. There was no trickery in the way he cured my son. He is a genuine Holy Man with a God-given gift for healing. He can cure me when my own doctor says I'm just suffering from imagination. In fact I'm thinking quite seriously about replacing Siglov..." Perhaps the greatest loss was Sonia's death scene,



occurring immediately after Zargo has deserted Rasputin and before the cut to Peter and Ivan in the Café Tzigane:

Int. Sonia's Bedroom. Night.

Sonia comes slowly in and closes the door behind her. She stands there for a moment, lost in thought. Then she licks the door behind her.

She moves slowly across to the washstand and, from a cupboard above it, taken out the bottle of brandy.

She picks up her toothglass and, crouching to the dressing-table, sits down and pours herself a measure of the spirit.

She sits staring at her bedraggled reflection for a while, then, instinctively brushing her hair from her face, drinks the spirit in one gulp.

Then she smashes the glass against the edge of the dressing-table, leaving a jagged, vicious edge.

She stares at it a moment, then holds out her wrist.

With her own eyes fixed on those of the image in the mirror, she draws the sharp edge of broken glass across her wrist.

Int. Café Tzigane. Night.

A splash of bright red erupts against a white background.

The CAMERA cases to reveal that a glass of red wine has been spilled across a table-cloth...

It is thought that Yousouppoff, upon legal instructions, signed every page of a shooting script as an indemnity against any possible lawsuit. No copy survives.

Shooting

Rasputin the Mad Monk went before the Bony Studios cameras between Monday 7th June and Tuesday 20th July 1965; its budget was set at £99,862, although its final certified costs would leap to some £111,617 by the following November. Expenses were kept in check by Hammer's matronising and reuse of many of the sets from *Dracula Prince of Darkness*, shot immediately beforehand. The exterior of Dracula's castle became the exterior of the palatial apartments; parts of Dracula's subterranean vault became the St. Petersburg cellar bar, and so on. Specially constructed sets included

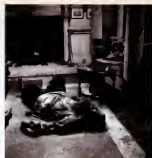


Zargo's laboratory and tenement flat, the Tsarevitch's bedchamber, and others. The four days of woodland exteriors were once again mounted at Berkshire's Black Park; the St. Petersburg market was constructed immediately outside the doors of Bray's Stage 2.

Some of the principal players from the previous effort were also recycled: Richard Pasco, Dinsdale Landon and the distinguished actress Renee Asherson added to their number. Pasco had previously appeared in Hammer's *Yesterday's Enemy*, *Sword of Sherwood Forest* and *The Gorgon*; he can shortly be seen in the BBC's forthcoming adaptation of David Hare's *The Absence of War*.



Above: Child actor Robert Duncan, playing the young Tsarevitch, comes a cropper. Below: the cushioning mattresses and safety-conscious crewmembers.



Atherton, married to Robert Donat, appeared as Angela in Val Guest's *The Day After Tomorrow*, and as Mrs Maxwell in *Theatre of Blood*. Irnkeeper Derek Francis played in Hammer's *Captain Clegg* as the Square, and later as the Bishop in *To the Devil... a Daughter*. He was Lord Trevanion in Roger Corman's Poe adaptation, *The Tomb of Ligeia*. He died on 29th March 1984. Joss Ackland's stellar career includes one other genre appearance: as Rogers in *The House That Dripped Blood*. Abbot John Welsh had worked earlier for Hammer, cast as Bergman in *The Revenge of Frankenstein*. He died on 21st April 1985. Court Physician John Bailey passed away on 18th February 1989.

Don Sharp picked two acting newcomers, fresh from RADA, for minor roles: 20-year-old Fiona Hartford, playing the irnkeeper's flighty daughter Tania, was spotted on television, whereas 23-year-old Michael Cadman, playing her brother Michael, was a genuine ingenue. "Michael Cadman I hadn't seen," said Sharp at the time. "I'd heard his name several times. I interviewed him, and spoke to people who knew his work. He had all the characteristics I wanted and I took a chance. And it's paid off..." Cadman was later cast in *Courtesan Drowns*, bizarrely, Hartford played Katherine's lady-in-waiting in *Courtesan Drowns*, bizarrely, Hartford played Katherine's lady-in-waiting in *Courtesan Drowns*, bizarrely, Hartford played Katherine's lady-in-waiting in *Courtesan Drowns*. One enduring mystery remains the inaccurate crediting of British actor Nicholas Perrill as Peter in the film's American press book.

The first week's schedule included the scene where Sonia attacks Rasputin in the laboratory. Barbara Shelley, playing the unfortunate lady-in-waiting, suffered two nasty accidents over the same set of break-away curtains. She remembered the mishaps in a 1982 interview with US fanzine *Little Shoppe of Horrors*. "Chris [Lee] was supposed to catch me as I swung back into the lab on these curtains after he pushed me out, and I fell and struck my head. The director, Don Sharp, wanted to go again because of technical problems and I fell again and this time displaced my coccyx. I felt it go and it was really quite frightening. So I spent the rest of the picture in great pain. It was difficult to sit and walk and after the film was over I had to go and have a lot of osteopathy

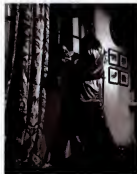
and treatment. So although the cast was lovely and we had a good time, it wasn't a happy film for me..."

Star Christopher Lee was keen to interpret his rôle as accurately as he could within the bounds of the script given. Playing Ivan, Francis Matthews recalled: "When we were running up to filming *Rasputin*, Chris wasn't in *Drezula* so he kept popping into the studios, preparing for the rôle. He had all these books on the histories of the Tsars, so we spent a lot of time during breaks in filming reading the books. Chris would give me a book and say 'you'd better read that if we're going to do it properly', so I knew the whole history." Lee even went to the trouble of seeking the advice of genuine doctors on how to play the dying Rasputin, poisoned by the cyanide-laden chocolates, and discovered that the "symptoms were 'grogginess, ghastly noises, apnoea, the body bent over like a bow. Everything I did in that film was medically correct."

The whole concluding sequence was the subject of some small controversy, as Francis Matthews

testified later in magazine *The Horror Elite*, issue 8/9, July/Oct 1977: "I had a marvellous light scene with Christopher after Richard Pava's been stabbed which wasn't seen in the completed film. He threw me over a sofa and the whole thing fell over and I fell into the big bookcase and the whole bookcase fell on top of me. And then I finally beat him to the ground and shot him; and then I got to the window and he crawled after me and grabbed me and I got him up to the window and threw him out. And they cut from Richard being stabbed, they cut the whole fight in the third cut from Richard being stabbed... I don't know why they cut the fight, it was very exciting. I saw the uncut version..."

Even after the conclusion of principal photography, Yousouppoff managed to give the production team a scare. The aged Prince brought a suit (not for libel, but "invasion of privacy") against the American television corporation CBS concerning a half-hour play entitled *If I Should Die*, which was broadcast on 5th June 1963. He alleged that the play depicted his using Irina as a lure to bait Rasputin, giving "a sexual atmosphere to the assassination for solely commercial purposes. Facts were taken and fictionalised in an inaccurate way." New York Times clippings relating the day-to-day events in the case were forwarded to Anthony Hinds by representatives from Seven Arts, Hammer's US partners. All Hinds's scrapbook cuttings survive: "Very frightening", he commented upon one of them. (Hinds's miniature *Rasputin* library also included a chapter from the memoirs of Lord Jowitt, MGM's lawyer in the 1934 case, detailing his involvement.) Yousouppoff eventually lost his case against CBS on Monday 9th November 1965, the jury found that the teleplay had been a "fairly substantial recreation of history" and acquitted the network accordingly. Yousouppoff returned home to Paris without the \$1.5 million he'd apparently anticipated.



The trailer opened on a close shot of Rasputin's hands moving apart to reveal his penetrating, hypnotic stare, then cut to a short series of clips (the fight in the barn, Rasputin hypnotising Sonia, Sonia throwing the Tsarevitch from the ballustrade of the Winter Palace) overlaid with the sound of Rasputin's speech in the Abbot's study ("The power is mine and I shall use it as I please!"). Clips and captions were revealed for Christopher Lee, Barbara Shelley and Richard Pasco, before a narrator launched into the following commentary:

"Rasputin possessed a violent evil power... He climbed the steps of history till his ruthless ambitions encompassed the furies of all Russia..."

Cue shots of Zargo, Peter and Ivan plotting to kill Rasputin, and a glimpse of Zargo poisoning chocolates with a hypodermic needle. Cut to titles, wavering between red and green:

BUT THEY CAN KILL -

THIS MAN POSSESSED BY SUPER HUMAN POWERS OF EVIL.

"RASPUTIN THE MAD MONK"

On Release

Opening a double-bill with *The Reptile*, Rasputin's press and trade screening fell upon Valentine's Day 1966, with circuit release commencing Sunday 6th March. It opened statewide on 16th April.

Suggested Warner-Pathe press book promo japes included, as per *Prince of Darkness*, a 'Christopher Lee Film Titles' competition, a similarly-themed 'Anagram Contest' ('Take the above titles, jumble them up, and you have an anagram contest that will intrigue both old and young. For example: Ldivepshl Stripe - Devil Ship Pirates') plus a 'Film Title Building Puzzle'. They also suggested advertising for "12 members of the public to register with you as a 'jury'. Select your panel and invite them to see the film and afterwards give their considered opinions to the press as to whether Rasputin was genuine in his

PRESSBOOK

medical works, sane or mad, generally misunderstood by a modern world, etc." A novella-version of the script was included as part of Pan Books' Second Hammer Horror Omnibus. A television trailer was used to promote the film; however, box-office receipts picked up on the second leg of general release when, in fact, there had been no advertisements running at the time. Consequently, discussions took place at Hammer to discuss the value of television trailers overall.

Prince Yousouppoff died, at the age of 80, on the 27th September 1967. The floodgates were open. The epic, Oscar-winning *Nicholas and Alexandra* was released in 1971; future Doctor Who Tom Baker took the part of Rasputin. BBC's *Rasputin* aired in October 1972 as part of the Stage 2 series; Robert Stephens played the lead. There was a Russian version of the story (filmed, incredibly, in 'SovScope') starring Alexei Petrenko, completed in 1977. It didn't get a showing until the Moscow Film Festival all of four years later, and wasn't exhibited in the West in 1985. An Austrian version, directed by Ernst Hoffbauer, appeared in 1986.

Hammer's *Rasputin the Mad Monk* was released on video in the UK by Castle Pictures (CAS5139) in April 1991, and will be re-issued by Lumac (LUM 2210) on 22nd May 1995.

Below: the film's Argentinian poster

Left: the American press book

RASPUTIN THE MAD MONK

Comment



**DISGUISE YOURSELF
FROM THE FORCES
OF EVIL!**

**GET YOUR 'RASPUTIN' BEARD
FREE
AS YOU ENTER THEATRE!**
GIVEN TO GUYS AND GALS ALIKE!



*Once
under
his
spell
they
would
kill
for
him!*

**RASPUTIN
THE MAD
MONK**

A Hammer Film
CHRISTOPHER LEE
BARBARA SHELLEY-RICHARD PASCO
Produced by WILFRED BRIDGES. Screened by JOHN LLOYD
CINEMASCOPE-COLOR BY DELUXE
A Seven Arts-Hammer Production
Released by 20th Century-Fox

**"Oh, he's
a proper
rascal . . ."**

Reviews were decidedly mixed for Hammer's Rasputin. Most scathing was Monthly Film Bulletin in April 1966:

The Rasputin legend is enough of a blend of historical fact and embellished myth to merit something more than this undistinguished melodrama has to offer. Den Seary's director makes little attempt to capture the essence of the enshrining splendor of the Tsarist court, and Christopher Lee's towering presence is at odds with the antinomies of the script . . . we are reminded that this is a Hammer production by gratuitous shots of a back-of-the-hand and a face scarred by acid burns . . . and with the exception of Richard Pasco, who lends some depth to his performance as Rasputin's drunken colleague, the players peep round the settings like a row of sore thumbs.

"Hammer Films' global round-up of master villains had to get to Rasputin eventually," noted 'Robe' in *Variety*, 27th April 1966.

... this Hammer Film effort's surface appeal, in its really first class color photography, art direction and professional casting makes this plot inane. Christopher Lee's Rasputin is completely in character - huge, deep-voiced, compelling stare - oh, he's a proper rascal - and this variation makes him also a dancer (not that one ever sees a long shot of dancing. It's usually his upper half, then out to a real dancer's feet, then back. But it goes with the atmosphere and is, after the first shock, quite acceptable) . . .

Britain's *The Daily Cinema* had been more guarded on 16th February previous:

... There's little feeling for the period . . . place . . . and politics . . . which is surprising considering that Den Seary is the director . . .

What remains is a lot of perfectly good British actors trying to believe like Russian peasants and noblemen and an assortment of garish shocks and thrills . . .

In his best part for ages, Christopher Lee gives his best performance and Barbara Shelley (as Sonia) has hysterics in her usual splendid style . . . Roma Anderson does her best with the unconvincing role of the Tsarina (no trace of the Tsar, I might add).

I must say it seems a bit of a waste of a scathing subject, but old horror fans will no doubt find it satisfying.

Right: Anthony Nelson Keys joins Barbara Shelley for an impromptu interview during shooting

Any historical part is difficult to play, because you're dealing with fact. In this case, there was a mass of conflicting evidence, so I had to rely, to a certain extent, on my own ideas of what I thought he was like. I met Rasputin's daughter about five years ago in Los Angeles, and I was a little apprehensive about it. I thought, 'if she's seen this film, I'm in trouble!' because I didn't exactly portray him as a sympathetic character. So I met her, and she said, 'You look like him!' I said, 'Surely that's not entirely true, because I'm taller than he was, and he had blue-grey eyes.' She said, 'No, no, no! It's the expression!' I didn't dare ask her what she meant!"

*Christopher Lee - from *Fangoria* # 42, February 1985*

It's be quite honest that it is a Hammer film, and it is not by any means a historical biography of Rasputin. It is an entertainment film based on some incidents of Rasputin's life. But these incidents are taken from various sources and so they appear to contradict one another because all the writers on Rasputin appear to contradict one another. This is one reason why he's such a fascinating person, because there are so many facets to his character. Some people believe that he was really a very holy man. He had great powers of hypnotism, he had very real powers of faith healing, he had certain powers of second sight or premonition. All these somehow contradict the image of the rapist, the very heavy drinker. He is such a complex character that one doesn't try to define him in any way. So we have very quick changes from a scene where he's really curing somebody in a faith healing scene and suddenly the elation of the success of this leads him into a wild party which leads him into a sex scene . . . and then you're back in the monastery with him.

We never attempt to make any statements about him, never say what he is, is he a faker, is he from the Devil or is he from the powers of good?"

*Den Seary - from *Film and Filing*, August 1965*

I'm a great admirer of Chris. When he played Rasputin, I thought he was brilliant. If it hadn't have been a Hammer film, he would have had incredible reviews for that . . . Really, it's very difficult to work with a great mate and be impressed. Yet he could almost hypnotise me in Rasputin. This tremendous inner strength came through. He's made a great career for himself, but he's under-rated. There's another tremendous facet of Christopher Lee's acting ability that was never brought out because of the direction his career took."

*Barbara Shelley - from *Scandal Sheet* # 11, spring 1994*



Critique

radiant in *Dracula Prince of Darkness* – is totally wasted in the almost non-existent rôle of Vanessa.) As a result, actors in cameo parts come off best, notably Cyril Shaps as Zargo's drinking companion and John Bailey as tight-lipped Dr Siglow. Physically, Bailey has the lean and hungry Hammer look down to a tee: it's a shame Hammer didn't use him more often.

As well as an uncertain screenplay, the film is let down by one or two moments of cost-cutting clumsiness. The scene, for example, in which Sonia at her haughtiest says "I am perfectly capable of taking care of myself, thank you", and proceeds to trip over her cloak on her way out, could surely have run to a re-take. Altogether happier, though, are the spots of hand-lapping and vitriol flinging sheathed into the story to justify its status as a Hammer horror, though the justification is hardly necessary with Christopher Lee lending his massive presence to the title rôle.

Lee, admittedly, is somewhat hampered by the script's reduction of Rasputin to a mere monster of selfish self-interest: this Rasputin certainly has none of the complex motivations of the somewhat similar Svengali. But Lee contributes a genuinely risk-taking performance, nonetheless, even introducing a few nuances of self-doubt towards the end, as Rasputin, holed up in his palatial villa, begins more and more to resemble Shakespeare's "lonely dragon [in] his den". And, apart from Conrad Veidt, it's

hard to think of any other actor who could give such frightening intensity to the healing sequences or such elemental terror to the film's climax.

The suspense in these closing moments is all the more effective for the intrinsically comical nature of the trap into which Rasputin has been lured. As Rasputin smooths his beard and stuffs himself with chocolates in preparation for his big night with Vanessa, we laugh in horrified anticipation of the frenetic violence that's just around the corner. And the violence, when it comes, is done in grandly Gothic style, with few spectacles more appalling than that of the stricken Rasputin, insensibly determined to transcend death, crawling slap-like across the floor towards the petrified Zargo. And when Keshnikov and Zargo finally succeed in dematerialising their foe, we share Keshnikov's sense of shock – though hardly his complacent assumption that Rasputin is finally, irrevocably dead. Lee has left too deep an impression for that...

The violence, when it comes, is done in grandly Gothic style, with few spectacles more appalling than that of the stricken Rasputin.



If the pre-credits sequence of *The Mummy's Shroud* is a classic case of Hammer trying to stage scenes which the budget simply can't encompass, then in *Rasputin the Mad Monk* we have a whole film which is similarly handicapped. Contemporary reviewers (and, indeed, the director

Considered on its own terms Rasputin the Mad Monk delivers the goods in Hammer's most highly-wrought style.

himself) rightly drew attention to the film's failure to exploit the massive potential of its theme. But, considered on its own terms – as "an entertainment, not a documentary" – *Rasputin the Mad Monk* delivers the goods in Hammer's most highly-wrought style.

Confining by necessity to a kind of domesticated, "chamber" version of the

twilight of the Tsars, director Don Sharp and cinematographer Michael

Reed do all they can to savish the eye with gorgeous Technicolor compositions and some sumptuous production values. The costumes are a knockout and Bernard Robinson's sets are appropriately baronial or squalid as required. Spotting the various carry-overs from *Dracula Prince of Darkness* is an entertainment in itself, of course.

Many of the film's set pieces, too, are splendidly realised. The drinking contest between Rasputin and Zargo is a real hoot, with the riotous atmosphere of the Café Tigrane especially well caught. Memorable, too, is Sonia's last desperate appeal to Rasputin's better nature. When she finally twigs that he hasn't one, Barbara Shelley goes insane in the no holds-barred fashion characteristic of this actress, expertly negotiating the thin line between horror and hilarity. The lurid glow bathing Rasputin's features gives a truly demonic edge to a scene which seems to be telling us something deeply unpleasant about the relations between men and women. Or, at least, between male sadists and emotionally dependent females.

Though Shelley and particularly Richard Pasco give richly detailed performances, the script is unusually thin in its characterisations. (Susan Farmer, for instance – so relaxed and



Classic Scene



"The Power is Mine and I Shall Use It . . ."

Rasputin the Mad Monk (1966)
Screenplay by John Elder

Errant Brother Rasputin (Christopher Lee) is brought to account by his Abbot (John Welsh) when confronted by both the landlord of the inn where he'd raised merry hell (Derek Francis) and the burly, brutish father of Vassily, the unfortunate swain whose hand he'd severed in a fight . . .

RASPUTIN: During the time that I've been here, you've tried to teach me that confession of my sins is good for the soul . . . you've also removed all temptation from among us so that there's no chance of any sin here. I've merely tried to put that right. When I go to confession I don't offer God small sins, petty squabbles, jealousies. I offer Him sins worth forgiving.

ABBOT: How dare you blaspheme! You will be severely punished.

INNKEEPER: Father, please! Father, be merciful! He saved my Anna's life. She was dying. He fetched her back from the grave . . . It was a miracle.

ABBOT (to Rasputin): Is this another of your blasphemies?

RASPUTIN: The woman was sick. I healed her.

ABBOT: Healed her? How? With potions?

Rasputin holds out his hands.

RASPUTIN: With these.

ABBOT (to the innkeeper): Was your wife possessed of the Devil? Did he exorcise her? Pray over her?

RASPUTIN: No! I touched her with these!

INNKEEPER: It's true, Father.

ABBOT: God would never bless someone so steeped in sin with such a gift. It must come from -

RASPUTIN: The Devil? Who knows? I only know I have this power. I have always had it. I can feel it burning within me, driving me on. It is here inside me. It is in my hands. And I warn you, I warn you all that I, Grigori Yefimovitch Rasputin, intend to use it. The power is mine and I shall use it as I please! ✠



Rasputin the Mad Monk

compiled by
Alan Barnes - *The Story*, in Production,
The Script Shooting, On Release, Comment
and Classic Scene
Jonathan Rigby - *The Characters and Critique*



RASPUTIN—THE MAD MONK 1966
CHRISTOPHER LEE
BARBARA SHELLEY RICHARD PASCO RICHARD MATTHEWS OLGA LINDO
PISCALÉ JARON HENRY KEMERSON 1966

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BRITISH HORROR CLASSICS

Tigon's opposition to Hammer was rarely more effective than in 1967's *The Sorcerers*. **Jonathan Rigby** examines Michael Reeves' early landmark.

Professor Marcus Moncreaf
Eselle Moncreaf
Mike Roscoe
Nicole
Alan
Audrey Woods
Laura Ladd
Inspector Matoline
Belvedere
Seack Bar Owner
Constable
Tobaccoist
Customer in Antique Shop
Bar

Screenplay

Music composed and conducted by
Vocalist
Road
Director of Photography
Art Director
Editing

Make-Up
Executive Producer
Produced by

Directed by

Boris Karloff
Catherine Lacey
Ian Ogilvy
Elizabeth Ercy
Victor Henry
Susan George
Dawn Sheridan
Joe Duan
Peter Fraser
Mervyn Tashbrot
Bill Kersley
Martin Terry
Gerald Campion
All Joint

Michael Reeves and Tom Baker
from an idea by John Burke
Paul Ferris
Tom Daly
Lee Grant and the Capitals
Stanley A Long
Tony Curtis
David Woodward
Susan Michie
Garry Redner
Arnold L. Miller
Patrick Curtis
Tony Tenser
Michael Reeves

Distributed by Tigon (GB) Allied Artists (USA)
A New Line-Cinetel/Catal Production
Copyright ©
Length 77m (not
Dolby Stereo)



The Story

Mike Roscoe, a bored and disaffected young man, is recruited one night by discredited hypnotist, Professor Marcus Monserrat, to take part in an experiment. With his wife Estelle, Monserrat has perfected a hypnotic apparatus by which the subject can be controlled from a distance and his sensations enjoyed vicariously by the elderly hypnotists whenever they choose to 'tune in'. Marcus hopes to eventually use the invention for the benefit of old people everywhere. In the meantime, the Monserrats enjoy a midnight swim via Mike, and when Estelle complains of thirty years of obscurity and hardship, Marcus agrees to her plan to have Mike steal an expensive fur coat on their behalf. Ignoring Marcus's misgivings, she next tells Mike to take his French girlfriend Nicole on a thrillingly dangerous motorcycle ride. In her euphoria afterwards, she has Mike savagely beat up his friend Alan. Revolted, Marcus determines to relocate Mike and deprogramme him. Estelle retaliates by smashing the apparatus to pieces. She also incapacitates and imprisons her husband. When Mike, deeply confused, turns to old flame Audrey for help, Estelle tells him to stab her to death with a pair of scissors. Later, when Mike picks up pop singer Laura Ladd at a club, Estelle has him take her to a deserted alley and strangle her there. Finally, with the police on Mike's trail, Marcus takes advantage of Estelle's temporary drunkenness to will their subject to crash the getaway car. Mike dies in the explosion and, miles away, the Monserrats are incarcerated in their flat.

Background

Camdenwell-born Boris Karloff returned to England from the USA on 1st May 1959, almost fifty years to the day since he had sailed from Liverpool – second class – on 7th May 1909. The *Sorcerers* found him incongruously thrust into 'Swinging London', resending him, perhaps, of the narration he had provided two years earlier for *Today's Teen*. It also found him in at the outset of Tigon British, one of Hammer's most significant competitors.

Hammer had had competitors before – the Baker-Berman team, for instance, had produced a gem in *The Flesh and the Furies* – but in the mid-sixties two companies emerged which were to loom larger than most. Amicus specialised in portentous horror films, most of them rather limp, but Tigon were responsible for four classics of the genre: *The Sorcerers*, *Witchfinder General*, *Blood on Satan's Claw* and *The Creeping Flesh*. Tony Tenser, a former head of publicity for Miracle Films, had joined with Michael Klinger in 1960 to open the Compton Cinema Club. Compton-Cameo Films subsequently went into business not only distributing but also producing films (*Reptation* and *A Study in Terror* being the most notable), before being dissolved in 1969. Tenser had bailed out in 1966 and formed Tony Tenser Films, quickly rechristened Tigon. Among his first moves was the distribution of Herk Harvey's *Carnival of Souls* and the raising of £45,000 for Michael Reeves' *The Sorcerers*.

Born in October 1943, Michael Leigh Reeves was educated at Radley and, aged 15, made a short film called *Carmen*. Acting in it with his wife's first friend, Ian Ogilvy, 'It was a simple storyline', Ogilvy recalled, 'but even then you could tell it was very well put together.' Having reshot the film the following year in 16mm – again with Ogilvy – Reeves left Radley and flew straight to Los Angeles to meet his idol, director Orson Welles. In Rome in 1963 he was engaged by first-time producer Paul Maslansky to shoot small sections of Warren Kiefer's *Il Castello Dei Morti Vivi* (*Castle of the Living Dead*), none of them featuring the film's star, Christopher Lee. Maslansky was so impressed with Reeves that in 1965 he had him direct the Barbara Steele vehicle, *La Sorella Di Satana*. Reeves, a very wealthy young man, had boosted the budget with \$35,000 of his own, and completely overhauled the existing script under the intriguing pseudonym, Michael Byron. The film, which also starred his old friend Ogilvy, was lucrily renamed *Revenge of the Blood Beast* in the UK and, slightly more unflatteringly, *The She Beast* in America.

1966 found Reeves back in England and kicking his heels impatiently as several mooted projects came and went. The *Sorcerers* finally materialised at year's end when Reeves joined forces with several figures from Britain's thriving exploitation scene, Tenser chief among them. Compton-Cameo had handled a number of films directed by Arnold Louis Miller and photographed by Stanley Long. With titles like *Nudes of the World*, *Take Off Your Clothes*

and *Live, London in the Raw* and *Secrets of a Windmill Girl* they didn't mark the Miller/Long team out as natural Reeves collaborators, but Miller was recruited, nonetheless, as executive producer on *The Sorcerers* while Long photographed it. Miller went on to co-produce Reeves' epoch-making *Witchfinder General* and regarded the two films as 'the high water mark of my career'.

Stanley Long's memories of working with Reeves on *The Sorcerers* were rather more jaundiced. 'He was flinging blood about on the set like it was going out of fashion, I mean gallons of it. I used to constantly be checking



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Opposite (above) and left: the front and back covers of the film's colourful press book

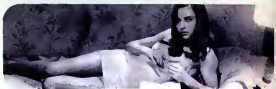
him. He had this obsessive thing about throwing it up the walls, and when Susan George was stabbed with a pair of scissors, it was going all over the cameras and all over the crew and everybody's clothes, and I said, 'Really, you know – come off it!' But he loved it. He seemed to revel in it. He definitely had a kink about blood.' Long would later return to the kind of lunacy he knew best, directing such films as *Nagby!*, *On the Game* and *Adventures of a Plumber's Mate*.

Just turned 23, Reeves found himself working with screen legend Boris Karloff, just turned 79. 'Karloff was lovely,' remembered Ogilvy. 'He really liked Mike, and he never liked his part, because (Monserrat) was an enormously sympathetic old boy.' Karloff was suffering from the respiratory complaint that would shortly kill him, and, having had an arthritic knee for years, had to wear a metal brace on one leg. 'I can't breathe and I can't walk,' he joked. 'Must be the result of carrying too many bodies upstairs!' The leg brace, according to Ogilvy, caused the sound department a few headaches. 'A couple of days after we started shooting, the sound men came up to Mike and said, 'We're going to have to ask Mr Karloff to oil his leg, as we're picking up a squeak from it.'"

Catherine Lacey, who at 42 was seventeen years Karloff's junior, had recently completed *The Mummy's Shroud* for Hammer. 'Catherine hated her part', said Ogilvy. 'It worried her and depressed her. She didn't really like having to do those things at all.' Other cast members included 16-year old Susan George who, having trained at the Corona Stage School, had spent two years in the West End production of *The Sound of Music* and had made a number of pictures for the Children's Film Foundation. Character actor Ivor Dean would later reprise his Inspector Motolin, more or less intact, as Inspector Large in ITC's cult television series, *Randall and Hephzibah* (Cancelled). He would also make a memorable, Irish-accented appearance as Burke in Hammer's *Orjahl & Sister Hyde*. The film's technical personnel included some strangely familiar names. Co-writer Tom Baker was not the future *Rasputin* and *emancipated Lord*, but a young friend of Reeves' banistered to the hard grind of committing ideas to the typewriter. He never visited the set, however, and so was not privy to the numerous day-to-day

script revisions. Tony Curtis was not the Hollywood luminary of the same name but an art director who decorated many productions for *Amicus*, and who, in September 1967, married Jytte Stenwig. As Yutte, she would later decorate Hammer's *Last For a Vampire*. A less distant Hammer connection was provided by John Burke, on whose novel the film was based and whose eight Hammer novelizations (including *Rasputin the Mad Monk*) had just been published by Pan Books.

Though he would later prune at least four minutes out of Reeves' *Witchfinder General*, censor John Trevelyan, faced with *The Sorcerers*, was sympathetic towards the young director. Ian Ogilvy: "Trevelyan was in fact a distant cousin of Mike's, and they liked each other very much . . . [He] was always regarded as being very unbending, but he would allow Mike to get away with just a bit more, because he knew Mike was very serious about what he was doing." A rare instance of nepotism doing everyone a bit of good. The press reaction to the film, on its release in June 1967, was somewhat apologetically recorded by David Austin in his review for the October edition of *Films and Filming*: "It makes me heartily sick to continually hear of complaints about the death of young talent in this country and the poor quality of British-produced films (the few that there are nowadays), and then to witness the reception accorded this picture. To be fair, a handful of 'daily' reviewers highly commended it but the remaining majority of film journalists either ignored it or wrote it off in a brusque paragraph." Calming down a little, Austin went on to note that "Sets, props and wardrobe create a completely



credible environment for the more fantastic elements. The film's surface appearance will date quickly . . . but anyone in the future seeking an accurate reference to the quiteness and mien of the 'new' generation will find it here far more so than in some other recent films . . ." The *Monthly Film Bulletin* was similarly supportive: "Reeves manages to build a considerable charge, particularly in the second half of the film, with a superbly bold performance by Catherine Lacey (Karloff is his usual reliable sell, but a shade weary), and a script which comes so close to authentic *Sadism* as anything since *Peggy Sue*."

The film was showcased at the Carlton Theatre in the Haymarket, and Karloff, who claimed not to have had a film of his play the West End for over a decade, was particularly gratified. "Well, it was an accident of fate," recalled Ogilvy, "an unexpected opening that they hastily scheduled *The Sorcerers* into – but Boris was awfully pleased." The film went on to gain bookings through both major circuits, ABC and Rank.

At the end of June, *Variety* noted the film's arrival in the USA. "The screenplay is competent and effective. Eastman color lensing by Stanley Long makes good use of several London locations and Paul Ferris's score is pleasantly unobtrusive. Karloff handles his rôle with notable professionalism and Miss Lacey adds to the macabre atmosphere with a rôle that could easily have been hysterically overplayed . . . Both Ogilvy and Henry look to be more than useful entries in the young leading man stakes." Run as a second feature by distributors Allied Artists, it was revived in 1972 when Allied paired it

for drive-in engagements with Peter Collinson's *Fright*, in which, coincidentally, the married Susan George had the leading rôle.

As well as making a great deal of money, the film picked up awards. At the San Sebastian Festival it garnered the Grand Prix, and at the Trieste Festival it won a 'Golden Asteroid'. Catherine Lacey won a 'Silver Asteroid' and, despite her unhappiness in the rôle, proudly advertised the accolade in her entry in *Who's Who in the Theatre*. A special Gold award was given to Boris Karloff; sadly, only ten days after he received it, it was stolen from the Karloffs' Chelsea flat – along with many other items of sentimental value – and was never recovered.

In November 1968, Karloff arrived at the King Edward VII Hospital at Midhurst in Sussex, where he died on 2nd February the following year. Only nine days later, Michael Reeves was found dead by his housekeeper in the sitting room of his flat at 16 Cadogan Place. He had overdosed on barbiturates, combined with alcohol. Like the youthful protagonists of his films – the similarly-named Mike Roscoe and the avenging Roundhead Richard Marshall – Reeves seems, by all accounts, to have been a man for whom "the time was out of joint". But whether the fatal overdose was accidental or premeditated no-one can be sure.





Left and above: pages from inside the film's press book.

Critique

If your criterion of what makes a good horror film is that it be really horrible, then Michael Reeves's *The Soreness*, together with his follow-up, *Witchfinder General*, must be among the best horror films ever made.

Reeves, first of all, was very fortunate in his choice of leading actors. Along with Peter Bogdanovich's *Targets*, the film provides Boris Karloff with a peculiarly moving swan-song. Accompanied by a jaunty Kurt Weill-style theme from Paul Ferris's score, and looking regally in crumpled pinstripe suit and goatee beard, Karloff is seen here at the height of his latter-day powers. Overshadowing even Karloff, however, is Catherine Lacey's truly harrowing performance as Estelle, moving from unassertive and inoffensive old lady to a position of complete power-grazed dominance with consummate brilliance. This is one of the most shattering acting performances in the genre.

The film's theme is stated within the first few seconds, with black-clad Boris Karloff making his unsteady way down the street as a young couple, modishly kitted out in white and mauve, breeze past him, smooching as they go. Karloff makes his way into a newsagents (reminiscent of a similar establishment in *Peeping Tom*), and harangues the middle-aged tobacconist, whom he calls "young man." After a brief scene in the Monserrats' apartment, where the only extraneous sound is the somnolent ticking of a clock, the opening credits blast in with a crash of drums, the scene switching abruptly to a raucous, crowded nightclub. The effect is almost comically disorientating, and Reeves maintains a relentlessly cruel emphasis throughout on the disparities between youth and age. The Monserrats' diab and dusty surroundings are constantly intercut with the flashing lights and rotating ramps of the club frequented by Mike and his vacuous friends. Later, the intercutting gathers momentum as Estelle's music becomes more and more overpowering, moving fluidly back and forth between Mike's homicidal outbursts and Estelle's wet-eyed delirium as she urges him on from afar. The effect is uniquely disturbing.

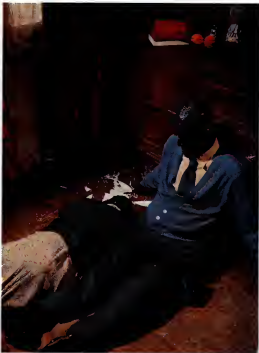
Many commentators have described the film, like *Peeping Tom*, as a metaphor for the cinema and the voyeuristic pleasures it can provide. You don't need to be an over-earnest Film Studies undergraduate to notice this – the film fairly screams it at you throughout, in the dialogue as well as in the cross-cutting. It's worth adding, too, that

the film could provide ammunition for the video banningbook burning fraternity from whom we've recently heard so much. They would be quick to equate the elderly couple, who are corrupted and destroyed by their vicarious experiences, with 'impressionable' teenage film-goers.

One scene which ought logically to form part of the Monserrats' experiences is conspicuously absent. Estelle has the unique opportunity to actually experience a man's sensations during sex, but when Mike and Nicole make love, the old couple don't happen to be 'tuned in' at the time. The scene, in fact, would be superfluous, for Estelle's real sexual gratification is derived from violence. The only bedroom scene she requires is the kind that takes place between Mike and vulnerable Audrey. The sort of penetration she favours is brought about by a pair of scissors, and the only ejaculation she wants is in the jets of blood that spurt from Audrey's midriff and splatter her face. When, later, she instructs Mike to take well-spoken 'top twenty girl' Laura Ladd into a secluded alley it's not for a hurried *afresco* coupling but for a grotesque Jack the Ripper-style strangling. Moments before – speaking through Mike – she tauntingly commands Laura to "Sing! I want to hear you again in your night surroundings..." To Estelle, these liberated females are mere 'alleycats', and – what's worse – they are young. To Estelle, killing them is much

better than making love with them.

In death, though, Mike and Estelle do achieve a kind of sexual union. After the impressively orchestrated car crash, Mike's feeble whimpers are heard issuing from the wreckage and, superimposed much louder on top of them, we hear Estelle's guttural groans as she expires many miles away. Moments later comes the final explosion and the whole screen is consumed with flames. What better prelude to the fiery horrors of *Witchfinder General*? ✠

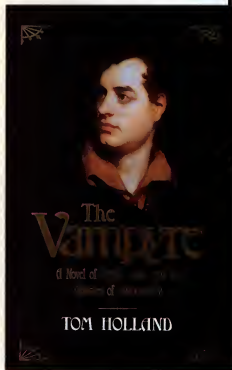


Left: The results of the Monserrats' very delicate Boris Karloff's judicious leg fence is clearly visible.

Blood Lines

The latest horror literature comes under the scrutiny of **Alan Barnes.**

++++ prime rump ++++ sirloin +++ fillet
++ minute steak + dog's meat



THE VAMPYRE

Tom Holland

ISBN 0 316 91227 1, Little Brown, £9.99 hardback

Despite its rather low-key and uninspiring title (Ruthven might have been preferable), *The Vampyre* is something of a corker. Elegiac and elegantly written, the novel (sub-headed *Being the True Pilgrimage of George Gordon, Sixth Lord Byron*) takes as its premise that the anti-hero of Polidori's famous short story was indeed a bloodsucking Byron. Author Holland tackles his subject matter with a passion and verve that shines through every tragic paragraph; it comes as no surprise to learn that his Oxford doctorate was earned via a thesis on the very subject. Framed by an interview with the vampire – more credibly conducted than



Author Tom Holland. Photograph by Simon Marsden

Rice, too – the story follows our devil-may-care poet-adventurer through a youthful grand tour of the Mediterranean, his bloody induction (courtesy the infernal Pasha, one of the nastiest characters you might never hope to meet) into the ways of the undead, thence back to London society, scandal and Shelley. Most brilliant is an awful, incestuous twist to the mythos which provides a sharp kick to the second half and engenders a horrible sympathy of the protagonist, who becomes cold and vicious out of sheer necessity. Equally tormented are the supporting cast: Polidori, the wracked buffoon; Lady Caroline Lamb, a carnal shrew; Haldee, Byron's e'er lost love; Lovelace, his 'tutor' and Rebecca Carville, his inheritor. All in all, pretty much sublime; and at this price, I can't urge vampire fans strongly enough to seek out Holland's 'memoir', and drink deeply of it.

ALAN BARNES + + + + +

Small Press

Many fan magazines are available through specialist science fiction/film bookshops, or send a stamped, self-addressed envelope/international reply coupon to the relevant address for further details. Magazines intended for review should be sent to the editorial address.

THE DEMETER MAGAZINE

A4. 12-20pp. Vanda L, The Dracula Experience Society, 32 Valley Road, Scarborough, YO11 1PB.

I'd like to be similarly complimentary regarding this, the magazine of Whitley's Dracula Experience Society. Truth to tell, I can't. Taking its name from the Russian schooner that



shipwrecks the Count in Stoker's novel. *Demeter* is all rather flimsy and unlikely to be of much interest to anyone outside this very active society; that said, the features on the York Theatre Royal's version of *Dracula* are terrific, but too much of this prose is purple and betrays avowedly amateur roots. But *Demeter*'s only three issues old, so it's best to not judge it too harshly; there's plenty of room for improvement. The society, on the other hand, seem a devoted and interesting Goth bunch, even if I wouldn't necessarily want to encounter them on too dark a night! One to watch.

WELLBUILT **++**

CRIMSON

A4. 28-32pp.
Phill White,
Thee Vampire
Guild,
82 Ripcroft,
Southwell,
Portland, Dorset,
DT5 2EE.

Top stuff, this newsletter/magazine from flourishing fan society Thee [sic] Vampire Guild. Issues 15 and 16 contain a quirky but persuasive mix of reviews and vampirology, tributes to Cushing and Carroll Boerland (undisputed star of Lugosi's *Mark of the Vampire* - her death last year went largely unnoticed); Interview with the Vampires - fascinating profiles of real-life blood-drinkers and the like; *Forteen Times*-style fang spottings; reviews



Plan 9 from Outer Space - one of Crimson's "vampire movies that suck".

and so on. Simple, smart layouts and largely typo-free (although both issues manage to mis-spell 'In Memoriam' on their covers). *Crimson* grants the Guild a certain maturity and style. Recommended.

CRIMSON **++++**



THE EXPLOITATION JOURNAL

LIMITED COLLECTOR'S ISSUE

THE CONNOISSEUR'S GUIDE TO HORROR & EXPLOITATION IN THE CINEMA

Bloody British Special

Vol. 2, No. 2-3
\$4.00



RICHARD
GORDON
INTERVIEW

PETE WALKER

NORMAN J.
WARREN

THE
AMICUS
ANTHOLOGIES

PETER
CUSHING

REVIEWS
AND
MORE



House of Whipcord
(1974) Pete
Walker's final
film, according to
The Exploitation
Journal

THE EXPLOITATION JOURNAL

Volume 2 Issue 2/3

A4. 32pp. George R Reis/Keith J Crocker,
40 South Brush Drive, Valley Stream, NY 11581, USA.

A 'Bloody British Special' from the US. Perhaps a mite slim, but the largely uniform excellence of the features within more than makes up for it: a fascinating interview with producer Richard

Gordon, a largely unacknowledged influence (Fiend Without a Face, Corridors of Blood and others); solid analyses of the works of slash auteurs Pete Walker and Norman J Warren; the Amicus anthologies... However, the feature on Hammer's Dracula cycle errs toward the insipid (and inaccurate, as regards Prince of Darkness particularly) and a spot of rampantly xenophobic Brit-bashing in the editorial loses them a mark from this Little Englander. Their elitism, imperialism and greed will always turn a stomach." Shame on you, boys, shame on you...

Readers: + + +

All Hallows 8



The Journal of The Ghost Story Society
February 1995

ALL HALLOWS

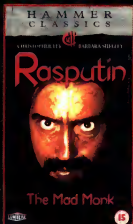
A5. 80pp.
The Ghost Story
Society, Ashcroft,
2 Abbottsford
Drive, Penyffordd,
Chester, CH4 0JG.

Thrice-yearly Journal of
The Ghost Story
Society, mixing accom-
plished supernatural
fiction with articles on
the literary Gothic and
associated media;
Issue 8 chronicles the
1960s television anthology *Mystery and Imagination*, amongst
others (revealing in the process another string to the bow of the late
David Mummy's Shroud Buck). Scholarly but never stuffy, *All
Hallows* makes a welcome addition to any serious horror aficionado's
library. Of the stories, Peter H Wood's *Mory's Desk* scores high on
the speak-o-meter.

Readers: + + + +

Competition

This month's freebies are ten sets of the latest Lumiere videos. The tapes will go on sale Monday 22nd May at £10.99 each, but here's your chance to grab a set for free.



Competition rules:

1. No multiple entries will be accepted.
2. No employees of Marvel Comics Ltd., their families, or employees of the competition's sponsoring company may enter.
3. The editor's decision is final. No correspondence shall be entered into.
4. All competition entrants must be aged 15 or over.
5. Competition entries must arrive by second post on 26th June 1995.

To be one of the ten winners of Hammer's *Frankenstein Created Woman* and *Rasputin the Mad Monk*, as well as the British horror classic *Dr Crippen*, simply tell us the answers to the following questions:

- a) How many Frankenstein films did Hammer make overall?
- b) Which film did Hammer shoot back-to-back with *Rasputin the Mad Monk*?
- c) In which year was *Dr Crippen* released?

Send your entries on the back of a postcard or sealed envelope to:

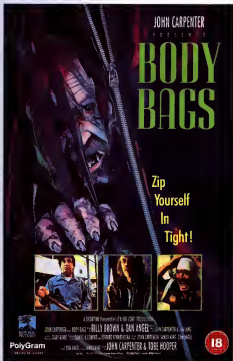
Frankenstein and Friends Competition,
Hammer Horror,
Marvel Comics Ltd.,
Arundel House,
15/15 Arundel Street,
London,
WC2R 3DX

Be lucky!



Tapes from the Tomb

Andy Black delivers the verdict on the latest crop of horror videos, including one mortuary-orientated film that definitely isn't full of stiff...



BODY BAGS

Polygram Video
Rental release 19th April

Oh no, not another of those dreaded anthology movies, was my initial reaction upon reading the press release for *Body Bags*. This, however, is a peach of a film. As a formaldehyde-swaggering corpse, the rather lively John Halloween Carpenter revels in his rôle as the horrific host of a triumvirate of terror tales.

First up is 'The Gas Station' which, under Carpenter's own sublime direction, is a tense, terse, economical scare-story with knife-edged slashes of gore. The similarities between this and the classic *Halloween* are not just stylistic but also geographic – it is set in the same town of Haddonfield.

A remote all-night gas station with mysterious noises and lengthening shadows is not the most appealing of locales, yet this is where young psychology student Anne (Alex Datcher) secures a part-time job. The seemingly innocuous Bill (Robert

Carradine) hands over the 'graveyard' shift to her for the first time and things get interesting.

Having survived a procession of weird and diverse characters – a leering creep (played by Wes Craven, no less), a 'regular' guy

Pete (David Naughton) and a drunken tramp, strange things then begin to occur in the garage opposite. After finding satanic messages scrawled on the toilet walls and the bloodied corpse of the tramp, Anne then has to face the axe-wielding serial killer who is now stalking her.

Carpenter keeps the *Halloween* theme running with a couple of simple but effective moments – the killer's demolition of a locker room/closet where Anne hides, and the shot of her dominating the foreground unaware that the out-of-focus killer is now advancing towards her.

Perhaps conscious of the customary failings of anthology films for having weak middle sections, Carpenter's 'Hair' is in fact the best of the three tales on show. The follicle-challenged Richard (Stacey Keach) is paranoid about his lack of hair, despite the reassurances of his voluptuous girlfriend Megan (singer Sheena Easton) so, seeking the security of a more densely-populated hairline, he elicits the aid of the improbably-named Dr Lock (David Warner) whose revolutionary new hair-restoring process offers a glimmer of hope.

Unfortunately, the subsequent 'transplant' proves too successful and Richard begins to sprout facial hair and even throat hair. As his now animated hair strands squirm independently, sporting lethal razor-teeth, Dr Lock informs Richard that he is just another of his victims and reveals his true identity...

What's most impressive about 'Hair' is the continual strand of humour running throughout, mainly poking fun at men's vanity. Richard sees his lack of hair as being un-macho and his vanity fuels his desire to look better. His hairiness is also inexorably linked to his sexual prowess and he becomes a major-league stud after his hair lengthens. 'We call this the stallion look' Dr Lock informs Richard as he peruses various transplant styles with 'Giddy-up!' being the enthusiastic response from Deborah Harry's nymphomaniac nurse.

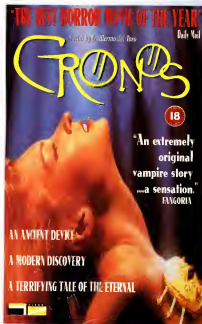
Carpenter leaves the final directorial reins in the capable hands of Tobe Hooper as 'The Eye' blinks unflinchingly at us. The story concerns a minor-league baseball player Brent (Mark Hamill) who loses an eye in a car accident only to have it replaced with the orb of a misogynist killer who died in the electric chair. The experimental operation comes courtesy of one Dr Lang, played by 1950s sci-fi hero John Agar.

Unfortunately, the malevolent characteristics of the eye's original owner begin to prevail upon the previously mild-mannered Brent and his ensuing violent behaviour results in him virtually raping his loving wife Cathy (Twiggy, yes Twiggy), and jeopardising their unborn child.

Brent's frightening hallucinations – which include him visualising a woman's corpse clawing her way out of a shallow grave in the back garden – eventually lead him to skewer the offending eye, symbolically splashing blood over the pages of an open Bible. The prophetic treatise that 'If the right eye offend thee pluck it out' proves most appropriate.

Although basically another variant of *The Hands of Orlac*, where evil characteristics are transferred physically via actual body parts, 'The Eye' still benefits from the inherent tension of an unstable family/marital unit and its accomplished cast.

With the linking black humour of Carpenter's corpse between each story – especially effective in one scene as he tries to repeatedly release a big-breasted corpse from a tight-fitting compartment – *Body Bags* successfully builds both tension and believable characters in the short time available to render it one of the most watchable anthology films since the hallowed days of *Amicus*.



CRONOS

Turtur Video

Sell-through release 20th March

Every once in a while along comes a film which displays a real sense of style and no small degree of originality - Cronos is one such film, and it's all the more impressive considering it is the debut effort from Mexican director Guillermo del Toro.

An ageing antiques dealer Jesus Gris (Federico Luppi) unearths an arcane ornament and discovers it is no ordinary piece. It contains the titular 'Cronos' device developed by alchemist Folcanello during the 16th century and offers the ultimate gift - that of eternal life. "You make me feel good!" exults Gris as he receives a youthful exuberance and appearance in return for small quantities of his blood. The life-extending, but ultimately vampiric, properties of the device attract the envious eyes of a ruthless millionaire Dieter de la Guardia (Claudio Brook) and his brutal nephew Angel (Ron Perlman), whose violent attempts to extract the device from Gris result in his untimely 'death'. However, nothing is so straightforward and Gris is soon resurrected, albeit in a rather emaciated body, and he begins to extract his revenge upon his assailants.

What Toro succeeds in doing here is mixing together black humour, surrealist scenes and visual inventiveness in order to produce some captivating celluloid. The continual inserts, showing the whirling cogs of the Cronos device at work before its impet-like attachment to Gris's body, add a macabre aspect to the proceedings as well as perhaps a knowing glance in the direction of Clive Barker's *Hellraiser* film series.

The discovery of the device itself, preceded by an eruption of cockroaches from a winged statue, provides a suitably ominous tone as if to echo the inherent dangers of Cronos. One can also marvel at the gallous humour of Gris's

'cremation' as the mortician Tito mutters, "All assholes think they are eternal," whilst gazing at Gris's corpse, which is indeed proved to be eternal as he shuffles away zombie-like. Later scenes of Gris being 'burnt' by sunlight and sleeping in a coffin-shaped chest with assorted teddy bears and toys either side of him poke fun at the conventions of the traditional vampire film.

Surprisingly, given the intentional episodes of humour in his film, Toro also displays an acute grasp of the emotional complexities of his characters and the resulting pathos inspired by their situations - none better-illustrated than when a tongue-tied Gris attempts to contact his grieving 'widow' Mercedes (Margarita Isabel) on the telephone to explain that he is still alive.

Gris also has a close and deeply moving emotional bond with his young daughter Aurora (Tamara Shanath) - her immediate acceptance of his corpse-like appearance and gaunt features perhaps indicating how children are less likely than adults to (pre)judge people on appearance and more able to judge on their actions and personalities instead.

All this, plus an enigmatic ending which sees Gris plunge his hand into his stomach (a la David Cronenberg's *Videodrome*) renders Cronos an auspicious directorial debut.

Melancholic at times, understated yet effective, epic and mournful, Cronos signposts the birth of a major new directorial talent.

BLACK CANDLES

Redemption Video

Sell-through release 13th February

First things first. Director Jose Larraz is my kind of hombre. The man who gave us the insidious, cloying evil of *Symptoms* and the sapphic excesses of the sanguinary *Vampyres*, here serves up an intoxicating brew of satanism and sex in equal doses.

Described as a 'fleshy melle' and condemned by one vociferous critic as merely exploiting satanism in order to show various sexual perversions, *Black Candles* may be scapilous but it is exploitation with style and aplomb.

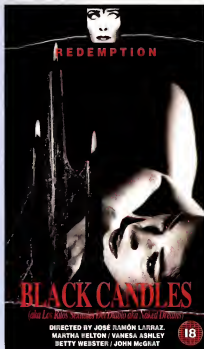
The action begins as a decidedly un-swinging couple - Robert, a Professor in Latin, and Carol, visit her sister-in-law Fiona in a leafy English village. The couple are still grieving after the sudden death of Carol's brother. Whilst attempting to clear the mudied waters surrounding his mysterious death, Carol merely succeeds in stirring up the local satanic coven of which Fiona is a leading member.

From her suggestive opening remarks - "I'm very fond of candles. It makes things very intimate" - to the lithe reproductions of demonology which adorn her house, Fiona is presented as a malevolent succubus - "a woman who is bewitching and charming" as one character comments.

Having successfully enticed Robert into her arms and under her influence with consummate ease, Fiona next sets her sights on the prudish Carol, utilising pieces of her jewellery which act as the conduit for her satanic powers.

As the coven closes in on Carol during a frazzled climax, one wayward member is summarily sacrificed whilst Fiona explains Carol's significance in their rituals thus: "You're going to be Satan's bride. Our lady of the sabbath," continuing unabated that "The sabbath is an orgy of wickedness in which all the instincts are given free rein." Carol remains unconvinced and makes a run for freedom.

Indicative of much of his work, *Black Candles* finds Larraz muting the horror elements of the film and accentuating the intrinsic sensuality of the satanic/succubus theme - the characters' wanton sexual couplings flying in the face of religion - epitomised by the hedonistic embrace between Fiona and Robert as a warming fire glows in the background.



the flames momentarily lapping her dangling crucifix as 'religion' is literally immersed by the raging inferno that symbolises hell.

In addition to such blatantly erotic scenes involving the rest of the more liberated players, we also share (voyeuristically) Carol's own surreal dreams as she imagines herself running through verdant fields in her lingerie and making love to both her brother and Fiona – perhaps a mental expression of her own repressed physical state. Contrast this with Robert's behaviour as he turns from loving husband to a desensitised, sex-crazed brute. The violence in his lovemaking is a symptom of his new 'religion' – the black arts.

Perhaps not the zenith of Larraz's work, but *Black Candles* remains a captivating spectacle and far superior to the majority of lame tosh which is currently paraded under the misleading heading of 'erotic thriller'. It is also heartening to note that whilst Larraz considers this a throwaway effort and one of his weakest works, he still effortlessly surpasses many of his contemporaries.



FRANKENSTEIN CREATED WOMAN

Lumiere Pictures

Sell-through release 22nd May

Despite its sensationalist title, Terence Fisher's third Frankenstein film (and Hammer's fourth), is one of the most effective entries in the series, capturing a compelling

blend of emotions, ranging from love to hate, passion to anger and sadism to pathos.

A quantum leap from the previous routine entry, *The Evil of Frankenstein*, Fisher's film is notable for a number of unique inversions on the traditional, read expected, Frankenstein legend.

Although the Hammer series always placed the emphasis on the Baron as opposed to his creation, in *Frankenstein Created Woman* there is not even a cursory trace of the Creature as we know it. In place of the traditional monster we have the alluring figure of Christina (Susan Denberg), and replacing the requisite electrical transformations of dead body matter into the living we have the altogether more spiritual transference of the soul from one body to another.

As the Baron (Peter Cushing) explains to his assistant Dr Hertz (Thorley Walters) – "Death is a physical thing, not spiritual." Having thus pondered the existential dilemma of the body and the soul the Baron puts his theories into practice when the innocent Hans (Robert Morris) is wrongly accused of the murder of a local innkeeper. His refusal to reveal his whereabouts at the time of the murder (namely, in bed with Christina), condemns him to suffer the mortal blade of the guillotine – the same fate he, as a child, saw befall his father. In a comparable scene we see Hans executed as his distraught lover Christina runs hysterically into view before plunging into a nearby river to meet her own death.

Now that he has the raw materials – Christina's body and Hans's soul, the Baron reanimates the body of Christina, only now incorporating the tormented Hans's soul. The girl duly seeks retribution against the three arrogant aristocrats who actually perpetrated the crime.

It is now that Fisher's avowedly psycho-sexual subtext



A beautiful woman with the soul of a devil!

surfaces, as Christina uses her feminine charm and sexuality to lure each of the miscreants into Hans's web of revenge...

Just as this duality of the soul, and the physical ambiguities it reveals, propels the latter third of the film into a heady climax, so too does it point the way for future Hammer product such as Roy Ward Baker's similarly intriguing *Dr Jekyll & Sister Hyde*, where masculine and feminine characters collide with enthralling consequences.

The physical representation of this 'spiritual' duality manifests itself in Christina's initial appearance as a disfigured servant girl – one side of her face unblemished, the other horribly maimed. After the Baron's surgical miracles are performed, Christina is left with a doll-like face, her beauty concealing the inner rage of Hans which prompts her 'ugly' actions of murder just as surely as her maimed features previously dominated her face.

Frankenstein Created Woman also calls into question the seemingly conflicting persona of the Baron himself – as in one courtroom scene he contemptuously fingers the pages of the Bible as if to reject religion although his primary aim to transplant the soul is blatantly spiritual in intent.

The fact that for his experiments the Baron is forced to rely on the hands of his assistant Dr Hertz is also mirrored in the vicarious actions of Hans – willing the deaths of the three aristocrats but via the body of Christina so, just as the Baron is indirectly moved from the responsibility for his 'creation', so too is Hans from the reality of the murders committed.

Basically, the Baron is a scientist surviving in a religious world, so his detached air seemingly removes his obligation to understanding love and other human emotions, as exhibited here by Hans and Christina, in deference to his zeal for scientific advancement.

Given the nature of these powerful influences, *Frankenstein Created Woman* jostles with *Frankenstein Must Be Destroyed* as the best of Hammer's *Frankenstein* series. It also poses the intriguing question of whether the Baron's survival indicates that his philosophy may indeed be a wise one – a sobering thought.

R/V

RASPUTIN THE MAD MONK

Lumiere Pictures

Sell-through release 22nd May

The legendary monk, who at one stage held sway over the entire Russian monarchy, is played here with relish by an imperious Christopher Lee.

Shot back-to-back with *Dracula Prince of Darkness* and thereby utilising the same sets and virtually the same cast, *Rasputin the Mad Monk* shows typical Hammer thrills, but an untypical attempt to combine historical drama with horror. It fails, but fails rather gloriously.

As the imposing Rasputin, Lee is the perfect choice for the rôle, sporting long black locks and a beard, conjuring up images of the Devil rather than of the Holy Orders. It is indeed this central ambiguity surrounding Rasputin which lends the film its primary narrative drive, as we are required to consider Rasputin as saint and sinner, healer and corruptor, good and evil.

His initial appearance, busting into a quiet inn and demanding drink, effectively shattering the equilibrium, is symptomatic of his arrogant behaviour. He then proceeds to use his hypnotic powers to faith-heal the innkeeper's afflicted wife, but this 'saintly' act is tainted by his attempts to seduce her young daughter – 'sin' for which he narrowly escapes a lynch mob but not the deadening propriety of the church.

Rasputin exercises his powers further by inveigling his way into the Russian court through his seduction of Sonia (Barbara Shelley), one of the ladies-in-waiting, and his apparent 'healing' of the young Tsarevitch. His eventual downfall is

HAMMER
CLASSICS

CHRISTOPHER LEE

BARBARA SHELLEY

Rasputin



The Mad Monk

LUMIERE

15

precluded by his lecherous advances towards another lady-in-waiting, Vanessa (Susan Farmer).

Rasputin the Mad Monk is Christopher Lee's tour de force, one of his finest performances, yet this is conversely to the detriment of the film as a whole. The character of Rasputin is so developed, so dominant, as to render the supporting players as just that, peripheral figures.

The Tsarina appears as a fragile, fanciful vessel, and Sonia as a mirror image (albeit to a lesser degree) of Rasputin, favouring carnal pursuits and alcohol over friendship and integrity. Dr Zargo is one of many pawns in Rasputin's chessboard of political power games, only rebelling when ultimately pushed too far by the rapacious monk.

The scenes of Rasputin's eyes literally boring into their targets and mesmerising each victim are effective, and part-explain how this apparently singular, but decidedly human, figure managed to exert such a Svengali-like influence over the assorted nobles and dignitaries.

If the film does have a failing, it is in its own ambiguity as to whether it wants to be a horror film or a historical drama – there is not enough visceral action to satisfy the former, and yet not enough depth and subtlety to indulge the latter. As Lee himself comments, "I played Rasputin and that wasn't a horror film."

Whatever one's opinions, the film can certainly be regarded as an ambitious failure at the very least, and at best a cautious triumph.

Who Were

Keith Dudley profiles four of Hammer's most important directors.



Hammer?

FREDDIE FRANCIS

"I don't think so much it was the fact that Hammer thought I was suited for psychological films, but Hammer thought I was suitable to direct films - that I could get them through on budget and on schedule."

- Freddie Francis

This award-winning director of photography, instrumental in achieving the look of such productions as *The Innocents*, *Dune*, and *Sons and Lovers*, began his career as a Hammer director in 1962 with *Paranoid*, an early example of the company's psychological thrillers. He went on to direct memorable horror films for Hammer and other companies, later resuming his career as a director of photography to stunning effect on movies such as *The Elephant Man*.

Born in London in 1917, Francis found himself employed in a variety of mundane jobs on leaving technical school at 16. He had always been interested in photography and cinema, and took up an apprenticeship with stills photographer Louis Prothero. Through his work in photography, Francis secured himself a job as a clapperboy at Elstree Studios and a camera assistant at Gaumont-British.

Called up for National Service at the onset of war, he joined the Army Film Unit and shot propaganda newsreels. With the experience gained there, Francis returned to civilian life in 1947 as a camera operator on such productions as Koeda's *Mice Over*. Executive Producer and Michael Powell's *Gone to Earth*, shot at Denham Studios. Returning to Elstree in 1952, Francis worked as camera operator on *Angels One Five*, a wartime RAF drama starring Jack Hawkins, and *Beat the Devil*, which reunited the cast of *The Maltese Falcon* with its director John Huston. With this experience behind him, Francis eventually became a director of photography and in 1956 received his first solo credit for *A Hall in Korea*, Michael Caine's debut film. Jack Clayton's groundbreaking *Room at the Top* established Francis as a master of his craft and, in 1960, he won the Academy Award for his photography on Jack Cardiff's production of *Sons and Lovers*.

At the end of 1961 was given the chance by 'B' film unit Brynston/Prometheus Films to direct *Two and Two Make Six*, a modest comedy starring George Chakrakis and Janette Scott. This was followed by uncredited work shooting additional scenes on Philip Yordan's adaptation of *The Day of the Triffids*. Original director Steve Seckly hadn't shot enough footage for the film to be classed as a

feature, so Yordan hastily wrote some extra scenes involving Janette Scott and Keenan Moore trapped in a lighthouse. Seckly was unavailable to shoot these extra scenes so Francis was drafted in.

1962 saw Francis direct Jimmy Sangster's psychological thriller *Paranoid*, one of the best examples of Hammer's Psycho-inspired productions. He followed it with the less impressive *Nightmare*, a confusing film that did little to enhance his reputation as a director. In the following year Francis directed *The Evil of Frankenstein*, Hammer's third Frankenstein film and sadly one of the weakest entries in the series. While containing some impressive set-pieces, the production was hampered by poor back-projection photography and a shambling monster based on the traditional Universal design.

Although he continued to work for Hammer, Francis's best horror films were generally produced for other companies. In 1965 he directed Amicus's first anthology, *Dr Terror's House of Horrors*, followed in the same year by the Robert Bloch-scripted *The Skull*. Staying with Amicus, Francis directed a number of productions in the years that followed including *The Deadly Seas*, *Torture Garden* and

They Came From Beyond Space. *The Psychopath*, another Amicus production from this busy period, was a superb thriller that put Hammer's attempts at the genre to shame.

Francis made up for the lacklustre *The Evil of Frankenstein* when, in 1968, he was asked to handle *Dracula Has Risen From the Grave* when original director Terence Fisher had to bow out. Francis delivered a powerful and visually striking film that made excellent use of its Black Park location, a strong cast, and a startling climax. He succeeded in breathing fresh life into a subject he felt "had already been done to death."

Even though he sometimes expressed dissatisfaction with the films he was directing, Francis continued to work in the genre, films such as the excellent *Tales From the Crypt* and the indescribable *Trog* illustrating the disparity of his work. After directing the superb *The Creeping Flesh* for Tigon, Cruise for EMI, and two rather low-level vampire films in Germany, Francis directed Peter Cushing and Veronica Carlson in *The Ghoul*, a memorable feature produced by his son Kevin's company Tyburn. *The Legend of the Werewolf*, which again starred Peter Cushing, was another Tyburn feature which Francis succeeded in

giving a Hammer feel and look. A further project for the company, a film of Dennis Wheatley's *The Satanist*, failed to materialise.

In 1980 Freddie Francis returned to his first love, acting as director of photography on such prestigious productions as *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, *The Elephant Man* and *Dune*.

Francis's most recent foray into horror was directing 1985's *The Doctor and the Devils*, a reworking of the Burke and Hare story starring Timothy Dalton. The results received mixed reviews, and Francis has since concentrated on directing photography. His Oscar-winning work on 1989's *Glory*, and contribution to Martin Scorsese's *Cape Fear* two years later, served to reinforce his almost unvaried reputation.



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- 1968 "DRACULA HAS RISEN FROM THE GRAVE"

PETER SASDY

"I don't personally like horror films, but I enjoy making them."

— Peter Sasy

Born in Hungary, Peter Sasy studied journalism and drama at Budapest University before escaping the Communist regime in 1956. He settled in England in 1957, securing a place at Bristol University. He later joined Associated Television as a drama director where he handled various television series, single plays, and documentaries, including an adaptation of Asimov's *The Caves of Steel*, an award-winning science-fiction drama which starred Peter Cushing.

built-in conventions about the way it should be made," Sasy said when questioned about his approach to *Taste the Blood of Dracula*. "I have to follow a certain format which cannot really be different, but it can be better. This is my aim — to be better rather than different."

Taste the Blood of Dracula dwells more on the hypocrisy of Victorian family values than the Count, and Sasy's film was darker and more horrific than its predecessors.

Based on the Hungarian legend of the bloodthirsty Countess Erzsébet Bathory, Sasy's *Countess Dracula*, released in 1970, was a free adaptation of Valentine Penrose's historical account of the character. The film was directed with care and attention (the fruits of Sasy's thorough research and knowledge of the subject matter) although the dubbing of star Ingrid Pitt later caused some friction.

Sasy's third and final feature film for Hammer was the more successful *Hands of the Ripper*, released in 1971. Produced by Ada Young from a story by Edward Spencer, the film was an intriguing twist on the Jack the Ripper story, stylishly rendered in an era of increasingly brutal cinema horror. The memorable climax in St Paul's Cathedral and the introduction of psychoanalysis into the mix served the film well, and it remains one of the best-remembered of the company's seventies' films.

In 1972 Chazelmagne, Christopher Lee and Anthony Nelson Keys's production company, appointed Sasy to direct *Nothing but the Night*. The horror thriller, which starred Lee, Peter Cushing and Diana Dors, was not a commercial success, precluding further activity from the company.

The disappointing *Doomwatch* and *I Don't Want To Be Born* were unremarkable examples of his other feature-film work, but *Welcome to Blood City* (released in 1977) continued to illustrate an inventive visual flair, even though the science-fiction western starring Jack Palance wasn't wholly successful.

One of Sasy's best-regarded productions was the BBC television play *The Stone Tape*, broadcast on Christmas Day 1972. Employed by producer Innes Lloyd on the strength of his previous horror/fantasy work, Sasy's interpretation of Nigel Kneale's modern-day ghost story used imaginative camerawork and superb lighting to strong effect. Screenings of the play still attract sell-out audiences at the National Film Theatre.

When Roy Skeggs and Brian Lawrence assumed control of Hammer in 1980, Sasy returned to the company to direct three of the Hammer House of Horror television episodes. Working from the Cinema Astra studio at Hampden House, Sasy directed *Visitor From the Grave*, the haunting *Rude Awakening* and *The Thirteenth Reunion*, a black comedy about cannibalism.

Sasy's stayed with television, directing Paul Scofield in *If Winter Comes*, before heading to Hollywood and an adaptation of Harold Robbins' *The Lonely Lady* for Universal. After completing three more television films for Universal, Sasy returned to British television to direct episodes of *Lytton's Diary* and *The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole*. Sasy's more recent work has included the successful series' sequel, *The Growing Pains of Adrian Mole*.

In 1968 Hammer, in association with 20th Century Fox, made their second attempt at producing a television series. Sasy was contracted to direct two episodes of *Journey to the Unknown*, with the option to work on more if the series was a success. Sasy directed *The New People*, from a story by Charles Beaumont, and *Girl of my Dreams*, a Richard Matheson-scripted story starring Michael Callan. Memorable mainly for its pre-credits sequence of an empty fairground and the haunting opening music of Harry Robinson, the series was cancelled after only 17 of the proposed 39 films were produced.

Following a year in Hollywood directing for American television, Sasy returned to England in October 1969 to direct the fourth entry in Hammer's ongoing *Dracula* series. "I don't have



Above: Peter Sasy (left) and Ingrid Pitt at Pinewood Studios for *Countess Dracula*. Right: On location for *Hands of the Ripper*.



DON SHARP

"I always thought it was better to tease an audience with suspense than to show them everything."

— Don Sharp

Born in Tasmania, Don Sharp began his working life in the Australian Civil Service before joining the Air Force when Australia entered the Second World War. Following the War, Sharp spent the next three years acting on stage and in radio, and narrating documentaries for the Australian cinema.

In 1947, as the manager of a photographic group made up of a team of Americans, Australians and Brits, he went on a tour of occupied Japan with the hope of securing a job on Forces radio.

The following year Sharp arrived in England with the hope of breaking into the film industry but, with limited experience, found it difficult. Initially making his mark as a radio actor (notably voicing the character Mitch in the BBC's *Journey Into Space*) he also formed his own production company with a small group of friends. The first and only film to come from this venture was *Eight Days*. Michael Balcon and John Grierson saw Sharp's production, liked it, and asked him to work for them as a scriptwriter. Working for Balcon, Sharp wrote many productions including *Ha'penny Breeze*, *Child's Play*, *Conflict of Wings* and *Robbery Under Arms*. As well as writing, Sharp found himself directing second-unit photography and working as a production assistant.

Hal Thomas, who at the time was the head of documentary production with Associated British Pathé, gave Sharp the opportunity to direct. Pleased with the outcome, Thomas then recommended Sharp to The Children's Film Foundation, a move that took the director into second features including *The Stolen Airliner*, *The Changing Years* and *The Golden Duet*.

1958 saw Sharp handle second-unit photography on *Curve Her Nose With Pride*, and in 1960 the feature film *Linda* brought him critical acclaim for his direction.

Sharp's first week for Hammer was 1962's *Kiss of the Vampire*, the script of which felt his guiding influence before shooting had even begun. "I thought it was a bit too bloody and a bit too gruesome," he recently recalled. "It's what they don't know that they fear."

* Sharp returned to Bray Studios in 1964 to direct Hammer's action-adventure film *The Devil-Ship Pirates*. Shot on the back-lot at Bray and on location in a disused quarry that is now Thorpe Park, Sharp turned in an exciting film that, although aimed at a younger audience, has all the Hammer hallmarks.

Aside from television work on series such as *The Human Jungle*, *Ghost Squad* and *The Avengers*, Sharp continued to direct feature films throughout the sixties. The atmospheric chiller *Witchcraft*, made in 1964 and starring Jack Hedley and Len Chaney Jr., remains one of his best-regarded genre films. 1965 saw Sharp employed by exploitation producer Harry Alan Towers on his production of *The Foe of Fu Manchu*, the first of a series of films starring Christopher Lee in the title role of the Oriental criminal mastermind. Shot on location in Ireland, the film was successful enough to spawn a sequel the following year. *The Brides of Fu Manchu* was again directed by Sharp, who cited the poor quality of the scripts as his reason for not continuing with the series. Don Sharp's next film for Hammer was *Rosquelin the Mod Monk*. Shot at Bray Studios back-to-back with *Drood* *Prince of Darkness*, *Rosquelin* suffered budgetary restraints, last-minute rewrites and a final edit that was out of the director's hands. The film nevertheless saw an unforgettable performance from its star. "I think it's the best Chris Lee has ever done," Sharp later said.

Deciding to move away from the field of horror films, in 1967 Sharp took up an offer from Harry Alan Towers to direct Jules Verne's *Rocket to the Moon*. Filmed on location in Ireland with an



Don Sharp (right) rehearses the attempted murder of Rosquelin the Mod Monk with actor Richard Pasco.

international cast that included Terry-Thomas, Gert Frobe, Burt Ives and Lionel Jeffries, the production proved fraught with budgetary difficulties.

More television work followed before Sharp returned to feature film work in 1968 with *Taste of Excitement*, a psychological-drama which he also scripted.

Later genre work included the incredible *Psychomoria*, a British biker movie about zombified Hell's Angels, and the little-seen *Dork Ploes*, which reunited the director with Christopher Lee.

The mid-seventies saw Sharp's greatest commercial success in the cinema. In 1974 he directed the film version of the Edward Woodward television series *Colton*. The following year's *Hennessey*, a film based on the troubles in Northern Ireland, continued a similarly gritty vein. Sharp's remakes of *The Four Feathers* and *The Thirty-Nine Steps* for Rank, in 1976 and 1978 respectively, remain perhaps his highest-profile work.

In 1980 Sharp returned to Roy Skeggs and Brian Lawrence's Hammer House of Horror to direct *Guardian of the Abyss*. Sharp's skill ensured the satanic story was one of the best of the series, and one of the most faithful to the legendary Hammer atmosphere.

Don Sharp spent the last few years prior to his retirement in 1989 engaged on a trilogy of hugely successful mini-series based on Barbara Taylor Bradford's *A Woman of Substance*, *Hold the Dream* and *Act of Will*.

SETH HOLT

"I don't believe in playing safe. Just because an actor has a name or he happens to be under contract, it doesn't necessarily follow he's the best choice for a role."

— Seth Holt

Although Seth Holt only completed two productions for Hammer, 1960's *Taste of Fear* and 1965's *The Nanny*, they remain two of the company's best-regarded thrillers. In a career punctuated by long periods of relative inactivity and blighted by alcoholism, Holt succeeded in building a good reputation on a mere handful of films.

Born in Palestine to British parents in 1923, James 'Seth' Holt left



Seth Holt with Valerie Leon, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 20th January 1972

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LEE**

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Directed by SETH HOLT *Executive Producer* **MICHAEL CARRERAS**

Made on location in the South of France and at Associated-British Studios, Elstree

school at an early age to pursue his love of literature and art. He gained his first experience of the film industry at Strand Films where, in 1942, he was employed as a cutting room assistant. In 1944 he moved to Ealing Studios and edited such classics as *The Lavender Hill Mob*, *The Tiffield Thimblebolt* and *The Ladykillers*. His directorial debut was on *Nowhere to Go* in 1958 – a taut thriller notable for giving a break to a young Maggie Smith.

Impressed with this and his television work, Michael Carreras suggested Holt as director for the first of Hammer's psychological thrillers, *Taste of Fear*. Shot partly on location in the South of France in 1960, *Taste of Fear* is a highly inventive film which remains one of co-star Christopher Lee's favourites.

When discussing the classic *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, which he edited in the same year, Holt expressed his preference for atmospheres of "adult realism" in his work. "This film, I think, will be the forerunner of a new cycle, a refreshing and urgently different cycle in which we who make films can break with the fashions and conventions of the past and become more adult in our selection of subjects and in the making of them."

Three years later Holt directed *Stiletto Six* – *Sohora* for British Lion before joining the BBC for several years.

Holt was asked back to Hammer in 1965 to direct an adaptation of



Seth Holt (left) releases with star Bette Davis during production of *The Nanny*.



Seth Holt (center) directs a scene from *Blood from the Mummy's Tomb*, just weeks before the actress' death.

Evelyn Piper's novel *The Nanny*. Producer Jimmy Sangster succeeded in persuading Bette Davis to star, aware that Holt was one of the few directors who could handle the volatile actress. Davies' performance was one of the very best she gave and the film, Hammer's last in black-and-white, was a critical success.

The following year saw Holt embark on the first of several unfinished films. He never completed work on the stylish Diabolik, and the film was eventually brought in by Mario Bava. 1967's routine thriller *Danger Route* was followed by another unfinished picture, *Monsieur Lecoq*, in 1968.

Holt ended another period of inactivity in 1970 when producer Howard Brandy signed him to direct Hammer's adaptation of Bram Stoker's novel *Jewel of the Seven Stars*. Scripted by Chris Wicking, the production starred Valerie Leon, an actress Holt had originally cast in *Monsieur Lecoq*. *Blood from the Mummy's Tomb*, as the Stoker story was retitled, suffered one of the most fraught productions of any

Hammer film – a hasty production reshuffle saw the film brought forward, the death of Peter Cushing's wife led him to drop out after just one day's filming and Chris Wicking was barred from the set following an argument with Howard Brandy. These, and other factors, took their toll. Five weeks into filming, Holt died of a massive heart attack elicited, improbably, by a protracted bout of hiccups.

Michael Carreras pulled together the remaining footage and eventually finished the film. "I was sitting there one day after Seth died wondering what in heaven's name to do," Carreras later recalled, "and it was as if the ghost of Seth came along and

suffused me with the vision of what it was supposed to be."

Towards the end of 1970 the British Film Institute honoured Holt by screening a season of his work, culminating in a *Guardian* interview. The event served as an uncharacteristically public landmark at the end of the director's very private life.

Next month. Who Were Hammer? looks at the work of Don Chaffey, John Hough, Alan Gibson and Peter Sykes.

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